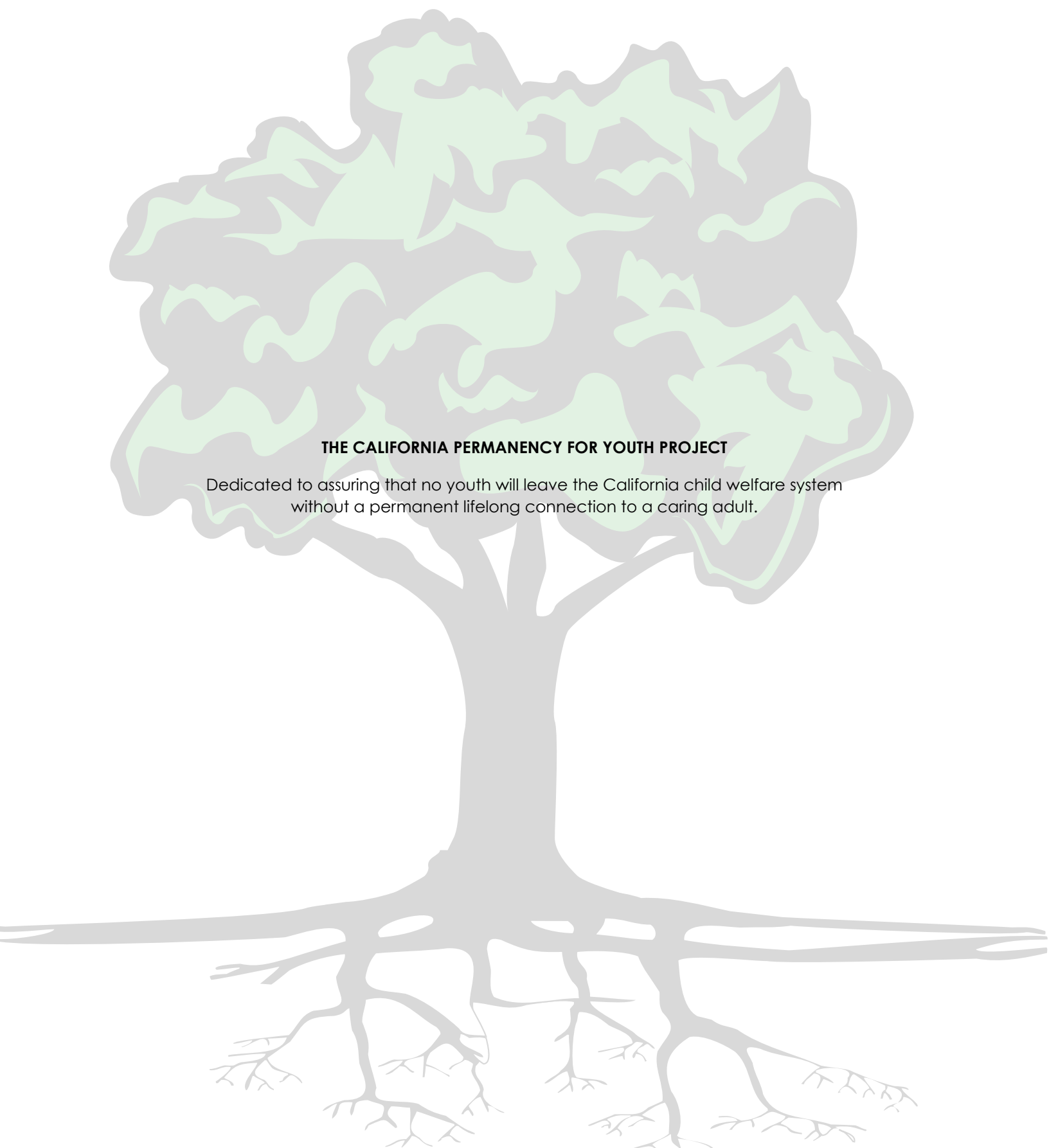# Emancipated Youth Connections Project
Final Report/Toolkit

THE CALIFORNIA PERMANENCY FOR YOUTH PROJECT

Dedicated to assuring that no youth will leave the California child welfare system
without a permanent lifelong connection to a caring adult.

Emancipated Youth
Connections Project
Final Report/Toolkit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BACKGROUND OF CALIFORNIA PERMANENCY FOR YOUTH PROJECT

Program Purpose

The vision of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) is to achieve permanency for older children and youth in California so that no youth leaves the California child welfare system without a lifelong connection to a caring adult. (See Appendix A for a definition of "permanency" and "lifelong connection.") CPYP's objectives are:

1. To increase awareness among the child welfare agencies and staff, legislators, and judicial officers in the state of California of the urgent need that older children and youth have for permanency

2. To influence public policy and administrative practices so that they promote permanency

3. To assist interested California county child welfare agencies and their community partners to implement effective practices to achieve permanency for older children and youth

Description of CPYP, Expectations and Outcomes

Foster care was designed to be temporary. Its purpose was to provide care for children living in unsafe and dangerous situations while supportive services were offered to their families with a goal of family reunification. However, thousands of children and youth find themselves growing up in foster care without permanent families or any lifelong connections. Some children living in foster care change homes multiple times and remain in the foster care system until they reach age eighteen and "age out." These children raised in foster care often have lost connection with those important to them and do not have a consistent group of friends and family. They lack permanency in their lives.

Research indicates that every year in California, approximately 4,000 children leave foster care without legal permanency, and an uncounted number leave without emotional permanency.[1] Without the social, emotional, and financial support typically offered to young adults by their families, many foster youth find themselves alone during important periods in their lives when they face serious challenges. Unable to overcome these challenges on their own, these children have become over-represented in the populations of young adults who are homeless. A disproportionate number of former foster youth become incarcerated, face early pregnancy, are poorly educated, and lack skills for employment.[2]

CPYP has provided technical assistance (TA) to fourteen California counties. By changing their policies, procedures, and practice, these counties are finding connections for foster youth in growing numbers. Two key areas CPYP emphasizes are (1) engaging youth in their permanency planning process, and (2) using new technology to search for extended family and other connections.

Youth have been involved in all of CPYP's work, including:

- California Permanency for Youth Task Force

- CPYP Advisory Committee

- conferences

- work groups

- authoring the booklet *Youth Perspectives on Permanency*

- digital story workshops in which former and current foster youth learned the technology and made videos regarding their experience of permanency in the child welfare system

(See Appendix B for a list of the organizational accomplishments of CPYP since its establishment in January 2003.)

---

1. Barbara Needell et al., *Child Welfare Services Reports for California* (2008), University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website, http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare (accessed March 25, 2008).

2. Ronna Cook, *A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth: Phase 2 Final Report* (Rockville, MD: Westat, Inc., 1991), and Mark Courtney et al., "Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: A Longitudinal View of Youth Leaving Care," *Child Welfare* 80, no. 6 (2001): 685-717.

In the past, most California county child welfare systems have not addressed the need for youth permanency, either philosophically or practically. Outcomes for youth emancipating from the foster care system are dismal. "Numerous studies of emancipated foster youths document that these young people have limited education and poor employment prospects. Many leave care and end up homeless, incarcerated, and physically and mentally ill."[3] The Adoption and Safe Families Act was enacted by the federal government in 1997 to address problems in the nation's child welfare system regarding permanency, safety, and well-being of children and youth in the system, but systems were slow to change and many youth continued to grow up and "age out" of foster care without having obtained a permanent legal connection to a loving supportive adult. Although several innovative model programs throughout the country are now addressing this need, these programs came too late for many young adults living on their own.

As CPYP progressed with its work, it recognized the importance of assistance from former foster youth to advance youth permanency. A number of former foster youth have helped advance permanency legislation, made digital stories on permanency, participated in the California Permanency for Youth Task Force, or have become trainers in the Y.O.U.T.H. (Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help) Training Project. These youth were seen as success stories for county-based Independent Living Service Programs (ILSP), as the young adults furthered their education and are considered assets to the organizations and companies they work for. Yet, these young adults left foster care without a permanent connection, and this absence of permanency seemed to affect their well-being. Although they endorsed permanency as the right of all foster youth, they often seemed to be defensive about their own lack of permanency. The Emancipated Youth Connections Project (EYCP) was seen as a way to assist these young adults to establish permanency for themselves and to learn what youth permanency practices easily translated to this population, as well as what adjustments were required for success.

Policy Context of the Need

The participants in EYCP were affected by the same issues raised by the research of Professor Rosemary Avery of Cornell University who examined why some children got placed and others didn't. She found that after eight years in foster care, the probability of adoptive placement was close to zero. Avery researched caseworkers' attitudes and beliefs on cases with significant delays and instability in care, many of which involved youth over ten years old. Through interviewing social workers, Avery found that 41% of social workers did not believe these children were ultimately adoptable and 26% were not sure. In line with such beliefs, 70% of current caseworkers had not used any of the seven identified recruitment techniques in the last year they had supervised the case.[4]

Avery also found that misconceptions about youth permanency abound, including the following: (a) no one wants to adopt teens, (b) teens do not want to be adopted, and (c) placements of teens are unsuccessful. In the concurrent planning field, teens are often ignored. Often, professionals working with teens focus on independent living skills, rather than forming connections.

Mark Courtney, PhD, School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, in his study "Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood," found that 41% of emancipated foster youth wished that they had been adopted.[5]

All of the above misconceptions have resulted in youth aging out of care without a significant permanent legal connection. Unless the programs which provide services to youth after they emancipate begin to address the needs of these young adults, permanency will continue to be only a broken dream leaving a "hole" in the hearts of all who dared to hope.

---

3. North American Council on Adoptable Children for the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Initiative, *A Family for Every Child: Strategies to Achieve Permanence for Older Foster Children and Youth* (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005), 11.

4. Rosemary Avery, *New York's Longest Waiting Children 1998: A Study of New York State Children in Need of Adoptive Families* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1999); and Rosemary Avery, "Identifying obstacles to adoption in New York State's out-of-home care system," *Child Welfare* 78, no. 5 (1999): 653-671.

5. Courtney et al., "Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood."

The goal of the project was to develop a model of service to find permanency for young adults who had left the child welfare system without achieving it. Cheryl J. Jacobson was selected to lead EYCP, based upon her success in designing and implementing a family finding and engagement pilot in Colorado called Adolescent Connections, Project UPLIFT. EYCP planned to rely on lessons learned from national programs, particularly Project UPLIFT, that have been successful in establishing permanent connections for youth *before* they left the child welfare system. It was expected that it would be necessary to make significant changes in those programs in order to address the current developmental stage of EYCP's young adult population. It was also expected that methods of obtaining old child welfare files and of locating connections that had been lost for longer periods of time would have to be developed.

The following section details the model developed in hopes that it will be of use to After Care programs and others who are interested in providing service to this population group.

The original proposal for funding to the Zellerbach Family Foundation outlined the following activities (see Appendix C for a more detailed listing of proposed activities):

1) Organize a team of professionals and a foster care alumnus advisor to plan the project and carry out implementation.

2) Conduct outreach to older youth that have been involved in our work and to youth to be served.

3) Engage each youth and establish an individualized process and plan to meet the youth's permanency needs. Provide a supportive professional environment to explore issues such as fears, coping with loss and personal defensive styles, ramifications of decisions, and other "emotional issues" regarding permanency.

4) Conduct appropriate searches to locate potential connections such as relatives, past foster parents, teachers, coaches, fictive kin, past neighbors, etc.

5) Engage and assess potential connections.

6) Prepare and support the connection to help sustain the established relationship.

7) Adjust the model of service based on the unique needs of this population as compared to previously served populations of youth who are in care. Develop lessons learned for this population.

8) Provide a replicable model available to child welfare After Care programs and others.

Introduction

Knowledge of personal/family history is a critical piece in the development of a sense of one's own individuality and continuity with significant others. When people fill in the missing puzzle pieces of their lives and learn information that is critical to their identity formation, they are better equipped to go forward productively with their hopes and dreams. The young adults in the project had many unanswered questions about their past. By finding out information about their past, the participants could explore interpersonal relationships and commitments which are important aspects of identity development; this exploration can serve as a precursor to developing truly intimate relationships. (For more information regarding program design and implementation, please see **Part Five: Steps in Building the EYCP Model**.)

1) **Establish a relationship and begin the connections work with the young adult**

   In order for a successful working relationship to be established, the process had to be participant-driven and strength-based. Regularly scheduled meetings established a rapport, thus making it easier for the contract worker (skilled and experienced master's level social workers were contracted with by CPYP) to get to know the participant and his or her history; built the participant's trust in the relationship; and modeled for the participant a relationship that was consistent.

   Participants were more engaged when they were allowed to determine the locations for their meetings with the contract workers. Each participant determined the place where she or he was most comfortable meeting.

   Workers had to be tenacious when participants didn't reply to phone calls or e-mails and didn't come to scheduled meetings. This behavior from the young adults seemed to indicate their ambivalence about finding connections.

   When the contract worker recognized the young adult's skills and abilities, not only was the relationship strengthened but the participant's ability to believe in himself or herself was also enhanced. Concrete services were as important as empathy in engaging and establishing trust. One example is a young adult who appeared to have limited self-esteem. The individual was nominated by his contract worker for the Collin Higgins Youth Courage Award. Out of 130 nominees, the participant was selected to receive a trip to New York City and $10,000. The participant was attending college and the money was important to his ability to continue his education.

In the first meeting with a participant, a tool such as a genogram, life map, or EMQ's "Connectedness Model" (see Appendix D) was used to lend structure to the intake interview. The philosophical core of this project was to explore all important relationships, past and current, for reconnection or strengthening; this information was collected in the intake report and follow-up progress reports.

2) **Prepare participant for the process and deal with ambivalence**

   Because many of the young adults carried residual emotional issues that impacted the successfulness of their efforts to establish personal and professional relationships, they were often fearful of engaging in seeking lost relatives and forming new connections. Participants' interest in family finding ranged from skepticism to apprehension to anxiety and anger (at what they were learning about their family or their family's response) to excitement. All were ambivalent. As participants struggled with this process, contract workers needed to be available to listen to how this project was impacting their lives and to offer understanding and any feedback to which they were receptive.

3) **Develop an initial plan with the participant**

   In establishing an initial plan for the reconnection process, the beginning step is defining the goal of the participant. This goal is often based on the participant's own understanding of self and past. For example, one participant indicated a desire to locate his sister. To do so, it was necessary to first locate his mother. Because he acknowledged feeling a great deal of anger toward his mother, the worker suggested that contact with her be limited to weekly contacts by phone. When his mother provided information regarding his sister, the participant located her; because he felt no anger toward her, he traveled out of state to reconnect.

   Participants needed to be prepared for the emotional trauma that they might experience with each step of the process. Some of the strategies were:

   a) brainstorming ahead of time all the "what ifs" that accompany finding a connection

   b) assuring that there were support people in place for a participant

   c) developing emergency plans in case things got too difficult. In one situation this involved providing the participant with the worker's cell phone number.

4) Assess safety issues

It is always important to assess safety issues during the entire process. It was especially upsetting to participants as they explored information from their past. One young adult who abused substances and had made past suicide attempts had a safety plan in place during the entire project. The worker did an excellent job in assessing risks, deciding what information to provide to the participant from his file history, and deciding how fast to proceed with family finding and engagement.

5) Access county records

Some participants set a primary goal of learning their history, so accessing county records was important. It was expected that accessing files would be difficult and indeed this was so. Several of the more mature young adults had already visited the counties where they had been placed and had obtained many of their records, which facilitated the process. It was very important to provide support to the young adults when they received information regarding their history. Although the information answered many of their questions, some of it was emotionally upsetting. Since so much of the content of social service files is extremely negative, much preparatory work must be done; it is not necessary to share all the information provided.

In order to access county records in California, a Petition for Disclosure of Juvenile Court Records (see Appendix E) has to be filed with the Office of the Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court in the county where the files are located (usually the county where the child/youth was removed). Once the standard petition form and an authorization to release records form (see Appendix F) are mailed to the county court, all involved parties (i.e., parents, subject minor, etc.) have to be noticed; they have twenty days to respond to the court with any objections to the request being granted. The county attorney then contacts the relevant county Department of Social Services to determine if they object to the petition. To facilitate this process for EYCP participants, the project lead contacted the county departments and obtained their support prior to sending the petition. In this way, they were aware in advance of the petition and were in agreement not to oppose the request.

A form letter to be sent to the appropriate judge (see Appendix G) was also developed. The letter contained information about CPYP, as well as names and phone numbers of persons to be contacted with any questions.

During the project, the worker accompanied the young adult to the county department and was available to guide the file search for details necessary to begin family finding and engagement (including an Internet search), such as names, previous addresses, social security numbers, etc.

To determine how to begin the search, the workers developed a profile of the participant's life. They identified relatives that had been the most stable and any last known addresses of any family members. Often family members resided together; thus contact information for one part of the family could lead to finding other family members with whom the participant wanted reconnection. Information regarding other important connections was also sought. Two factors were considered: (1) it is important to not limit the goal to locating just one person, because if the search is unsuccessful, the participant then has no connection, and (2) in order to obtain a successful search via an Internet search engine, some basic information about the person being sought is helpful. This can include (but is not limited to) names, previous addresses, social security numbers, etc.

It was sometimes necessary to utilize personal relationships of staff in order to obtain optimal services for participants. For example, one worker contacted a judge she knew when obtaining records was difficult.

EYCP Guideline for File Searches

The following guideline was developed for file searches done by the EYCP project:

If a participant is clear that she or he wants her or his file, EYCP will assist in obtaining the file from the county department. If, however, the participant is not requesting the file, first the contract worker will attempt to search for the person(s) that the participant wishes to connect with utilizing the information that the participant knows. If this is unsuccessful, the file will be sought to assist in the search process, but not to be provided to the participant. If the participant has certain questions, such as how many foster homes she or he lived in, the needed information to answer the limited questions will be sought. Since so much of the content of social service files is extremely negative, additional preparatory work must be done. The contract workers used their discretion as to what information was best shared for the purpose of achieving permanency.

6) Build a support network around the young adult

The importance of developing a team around each participant became more and more apparent as the work progressed. When a participant did not have a support system in place at the time of intake, the first major focus of the work was building a support network, without which the process probably would not have succeeded. With emancipated youth this step is even more important, as most of them have lost their supports that were in place with the social service system. Having this support network established prior to beginning family finding is critical in all cases, but absolutely necessary when the young adult is at risk of self-harm. It is important that the support team continue once the project ends.

7) Conduct searches utilizing all possible search tools and track all results

Some of the search methods used were: case file mining, reviewing birth/death certificates, contacting past caseworkers, accessing prison system databases, placing newspaper ads, Internet searches, writing letters, and calling the tribal contact (Indian Child Welfare Act).

Sealed Adoption Searches

There is still much to learn about finding biological parents when a case is a sealed adoption case. However, the first step is for the youth to sign the Consent for Contact Form which the worker then places in the sealed file in case the biological parents should also be seeking the child. There are many websites available to assist adoptees who are searching, such as: Adoption Forum, Inc. (www.adoptionforum.org), Birthfamily Adoption (http://birthfamily.adoption.com), AdoptionReunion .com (part of Adoption.com), ReunionRegistries.com (part of Adoption.com), Reunite.com, Adoptees.com (part of Adoption.com), Adoption.com, and Adopting.org.

Letter writing was used as a method of last resort as the percentage of responses is limited; however, it is useful when little information is available. In one case, a father's death certificate gave the address of a house from which his body was removed. After using the Internet to obtain addresses of neighbors, the contract worker sent twenty letters. (See Appendix H for sample letter.) A person thought to be the father's last significant other responded immediately, indicating that the participant had a half sister named after her and that every year they celebrated the participant's birthday. The family had written to social services often in an effort to find the participant and now wanted to see her as soon as possible. The participant was thankful for receiving family pictures, including some of her father, and learning where his grave site was located. Her own identity was clarified by learning about her birth family, even though this created significant periods of unease and she struggled with questions of if and how she would incorporate them into her current life. She later wrote, "This process has helped me find peace with myself and the things I have been through. I used to feel a sense of self-pity and loneliness because I did not know my family."

A form was developed to track when a search was completed, what tool was utilized, and the results. With twenty participants, this method was satisfactory. However, if the population group is larger, it would be important to utilize a computerized method.

8) Make contact with potential connections; prepare young adults and connections for reconnection; review the young adult's support team

As phone numbers and addresses were located, this information was provided to the participants in face-to-face meetings. Because it is an emotional experience for youth/young adults to receive such information, the project lead insisted that search material should never be provided without the support of a counseling session.

Because the project worked with young adults (as opposed to current foster youth), participants determined how, when, and by whom actual contact with the potential connection would be made. However, the workers urged the participants to allow them (i.e., the workers) to initiate the first contact to determine if the person was indeed the person sought and to learn what that person's attitude was toward the participant. It was hoped that if the worker was given the opportunity to interview a family member, she or he could obtain more family information. (See Appendix I for types of information that might be requested in initial phone contacts with relatives.) In addition, if the worker was the first contact, the worker had a chance to suggest that the family member reach out to the young adult for the first contact. This was important because participants, perhaps due to trust issues, appeared to have a more positive response when the family member reached out to them first.

Sometimes the young adult wanted to make the first contact and did not want the worker to have any contact with the connections. Although this wish was respected, this prevented the worker from being able to assess the connection's response and from obtaining contact information about additional family members. As stated by one of the contract workers, "having the young adult drive their own process was thought to be a positive thing in the beginning but at times it was not positive. For instance, in one situation the young adult made the initial contact with her family members and approached them in a critical manner." A recommendation is to develop a handout that outlines services to be given to the participants as services begin. This would provide more clarity on the process and role of the contract workers. (See Appendix J for what this might entail.)

The support teams established at the start of the project are critical at this stage. A support system should be in place for each participant prior to beginning the connection process. To meet the needs of one participant who was experiencing a significant amount of stress and who was also at risk of self-harm, a contract had to be established with a local caseworker to provide support for the participant and to help develop a local network of

ongoing support for her once the project was completed. (The participant lived over 500 miles from her initially assigned contract worker.)

9) Continue to build a trusting relationship

The ideal situation would have been for the contract workers to meet with the participants weekly or minimally twice a month. However, it was only possible to meet once per month for about one third of the participants, due in part to the circumstances in their lives. Many of them had not secured stable employment, and their living situations and relationships were unstable. Some participants had to move from place to place to live with various friends or acquaintances. Sometimes they had been unable to keep their cell phone payments current, resulting in loss of contact for periods of time. Some participants were less responsive (i.e., did not return multiple phone calls and missed appointments) because of the stress of the connections process and the unresolved emotions of grief and loss that the process stimulated. Also, for five of the participants, their contract workers were over 500 miles away, making travel and contact difficult. Some participants were less responsible than others and forgot appointments or failed to notify workers in a timely way that their schedules had changed, even when the workers had traveled some distances to meet with them. This again showed that contract workers must be located in the vicinity of the participants.

As work began and a trust level was developed, participants often confided things about their work life, home life, and relationships. One participant confided that her significant other was abusive. Another confided his fear of eating in front of people and feelings of anger toward his mother for letting him go and toward his step-father for his abuse and abandonment. Although the focus was still on permanency, it was critical to work with these other issues as well.

10) Work with developing relationships; Declaration of Intent to Maintain Contact; cultural issues

The ability of participants to develop relationships is critical to their success in the reconnection process. However, the experiences these participants had in foster care had not prepared them for being successful in personal relationships. Because of this and the "Lessons Learned" from Adolescent Connections, Project UPLIFT (see Appendix K), the EYCP contract workers focused their time on work with the young adults and with connections. Project UPLIFT's evaluation data

showed that the contract workers who spent the most time with the youth and next with the found connections had the most effective permanency results.[6]

The contract workers used the following questions to explore with both the young adult and the potential connection what the nature of their relationship had been and might be:

1) How long have you known ……?

2) How would you characterize your relationship with him or her?

3) What do you see as the weaknesses of your relationship with ……?

4) What do you see as the strengths of your relationship?

5) What would a permanent relationship with …… look like for you?

6) What would be your expectations in a permanent relationship with …..?

7) What are your fears of being in a permanent relationship with …..?

8) How do you think …… would benefit from a permanent relationship with you?

9) How do you think you would benefit from the permanent relationship?

10) What do your other family members and/or friends think about you having a permanent connection with ……?

11) Is there anything that you can imagine happening that would cause you to want to end a permanent relationship with …..?

As part of developing the relationship between the young adult and the connection, it is important that the contract worker help both parties define what the permanent relationship will be so neither party has false expectations. For instance, with a busy professional as a connection, it was important for the participant to know when she could count on seeing the professional.

The Intent to Maintain Contact Form (see Appendix L) that was developed by the project lead for Project UPLIFT was also utilized at times in this project. However, because of the age of the participants, the focus

---

6. Mardith J. Louisell, "Adolescent Connections Pilot: Project Uplift, A Colorado State/County Program," in *Model Programs for Youth Permanency* (Oakland, CA: California Permanency for Youth Project, 2004), 6-9.

was more on the content of the form whereas, with the younger population in Project UPLIFT, the process of having the form signed and presented to the youth to keep was equally as important.

It was important to assist participants in looking at relationships from a broader perspective. Some participants initially focused on the connections primarily assisting them with financial/survival issues. Correspondingly, EYCP helped the connections redefine what the relationship might look like compared to what they had envisioned. In one case the connection learned to accept being pushed away at times due to the participant's fear of intimacy. At the same time, the worker continued to teach the participant the importance of learning to give in a relationship.

Cultural Issues Relating to Connections

The following quote from one of the participants illustrates the impact that cultural issues have on the connection process.

> I have struggled with racial identity myself. For those that don't know, the foster family that I was raised in was African American. You speak of growing up as the "stranger in the land of the talls," I grew up as the pale face in the crowd. I attended an African Methodist Church, where I was president of the Young People's Department…my play aunties were all Black, my sibling were all Black, most of my friends were Black and as far as I was concerned/am concerned, I am culturally Black. And I never saw/still don't see anything wrong with this—these life experiences have given me the ammunition that I needed to spit on the racist ideologies that we are all subjected to, to become an advocate for breaking the color barrier.
>
> But something a friend said stirred me. Growing up, I never saw anybody that looked like me. It never was an option in my life, so I never yearned for it. But last February I got the number for one of my sisters and went to see her. When I stood face to face with a relative that looked like she could be my twin, it shocked the hell out of me. I am still struggling with the implications of this meeting to my identity:
>
> 1) My identity is constructed as "one who is alone," so how can I incorporate this newfound "family"?
>
> 2) I don't believe in "family" bonds that are defined by blood relation. So what makes these newfound people any different from anybody else that I randomly meet? Since I don't believe in "blood bonds," couldn't

any person I feel close to be considered my "family"? So then what is the point of these people being in my life?

3) Now that I am aware of these people that share my blood, how can I expand my identity to incorporate them? Is it even worth it to me?

11) Respond to the young adult's changing goals
Again, the young adult's goal determined where EYCP began its search. As the process evolved, that goal changed. In several cases where family were already known or had been recently found, family members appeared dysfunctional and the participant and worker felt that the young adult could not count on them. At that time, the goal shifted. One young adult decided she wanted a relationship with an adult where she did not have to do all of the giving, which was what she felt she had to do in her family. Recruiting a lifelong mentor then became the goal.

The participant utilized the term "mentor" as a word she knew and felt comfortable using. However as she defined the relationship, it was clear that she wanted a relationship that was more "parent-like." The contract worker was able to hear what the participant wanted in the relationship and expanded the usual concept of mentor. Several recruitment methods were utilized and an excellent relationship was developed with an adult who learned of the need through an email sent by the EYCP project lead to the California Permanency for Youth Task Force.

12) Prepare contract workers for a dual role
It is critical that project workers know about appropriate community resources in order to make referrals. Many day-to-day issues impacted the lives of the participants; the foster care system had not prepared them to engage in healthy relationships and deal with the problems of daily living. When these crises disrupted their lives, it was necessary to assist in dealing with the problems before family search and engagement could continue.

The project was not designed to provide clinical services but to utilize available providers in the area for participants when necessary. However, many of the participants did not want counseling, so the contract workers often took on a therapeutic role. When the contract workers wore dual hats, it was important that they maintained role clarification and stayed focused as much as possible on family finding and engagement.

In extreme cases, such as when a participant appeared suicidal, contractors reviewed the participant's safety plan and confirmed that it was being utilized by the participant. This type of activity should not be expected

of a contract worker and therefore, it became clear that this kind of support can best be provided by full-service agencies that can address a wide variety of issues.

13) Develop a support group for participants

In order to provide support to the participants during the family finding and engagement process, the project developed a participant group. Due to the geographical spread of the participants, EYCP tried the innovative approach of a support group which met online. All of the participants were experienced Internet users and had access to Internet service, so this method was an effective way for EYCP to provide information and to help participants share their concerns and insights with each other. Family Builders by Adoption, an EYCP partner with experience in running groups for younger youth, began exploring the use of a confidential chat room.

After setting up the group via Yahoo, EYCP participants were invited to join. The group could be joined by invitation only and required a Yahoo ID. Rules, guidelines, and disclaimers were given to all participants (see Appendixes M and N). When only two participants actively used the group, EYCP wondered if participants who knew one another were communicating directly.

At this point, changes were made regarding structure. It was thought that perhaps "lurkers" were using the group. Lurkers are invited participants not yet comfortable enough to write anything. The group leader decided to write a message that asked everyone to say "hi" so all members would know who was present. This type of introductory courtesy would be a normal part of a face-to-face group and also seemed appropriate for an online group. At this point, administrators also decided to drop out of the group to make participants more comfortable. These changes seemed to temporarily increase group use.

In the end, it appears that this has not been a successful method of providing support to the participants. Only one participant utilized the group extensively but for her it was extremely valuable. Writing to the group was an important therapeutic tool for her to work through the emotions of grief, loss, etc. as she participated in family finding and connections work and she received support from other participants.

In conclusion, there is still much to be learned about Internet group use. EYCP partners discussed how much structure an Internet group should have. Should it be non-directed, or should it provide didactic material to group members? Areas of didactic material discussed consisted of information about relationships and loss, such as (a) why connections are important,

(b) expectations of relationships, (c) how to maintain relationships, (d) overcoming fears, and (e) positive and negative defenses.

For liability and best practice reasons, a discussion group needs to be differentiated from a therapy group. The participants need to feel that they own both the content and the tone of the discussion group, but given the emotional vulnerability elicited by the family finding process, workers must address safety needs. If the contract workers are also functioning in the dual role of therapists, a possible solution might be that they monitor the group and respond privately to particular issues as they surface.

14) Plan for closure and close case

In the beginning, the EYCP participants were told when the project would end. Over the course of the service, the contract workers and the participants developed close relationships. When it became necessary to extend the length of the project in order to ethically complete the permanency work, the participants became anxious about when their services would end, in part due to their experiences of being abandoned in previous relationships. It was decided that contract workers would begin a plan for closure for each participant both in order to decrease anxiety and to have this ending be a more positive experience**.** (See Appendix O for Closure Report Form.)

The plan for closure included what still needed to be done in order to achieve the participant's goals and an expected timeframe. An ending celebration was held at a local restaurant.

15) Lessons learned from adolescent connections

EYCP built on lessons learned from other national permanency efforts including Adolescent Connections, Project UPLIFT (see Appendix K).

Although the activities listed in the EYCP project proposal focused on direct services to the project participants, the EYCP team also felt it was very important to collect data for project evaluation. This information was needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of the work and meet reporting requirements to funders.

Participants

Characteristics

Mean age and gender: At the time the project began in January 2006, the mean age of the participants was 23.68 years. The participants ranged in age from seventeen to thirty-nine. Six of the participants were male and fourteen were female. Six of the participants identified themselves as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning).

According to the participants, the average number of years in care was 11.5; the average number of placements was twelve. Although the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 established a federal standard for county departments of three or fewer placements, best practice standards dictated minimizing moves prior to the Act. The fact that counties met this standard for only four of the participants (all placed before 1997) aptly demonstrates the lack of appropriate care these young adults received (as well as the need for federal regulations). Although most participants thought their parents' rights had been terminated, only three had some estimate as to how old they were when this had occurred. Due to the difficulty in obtaining old social services records, this information is based on the participants' estimates.

Five of the participants were Caucasian, seven were African American, five were Latino, and three identified themselves as being mixed ethnicity (one Caucasian/Asian and two Caucasian/Latino).

Five of the participants were mothers juggling the demands of that role with employment/future education and attempting to find time to engage in family finding and engagement. Although this was difficult for them, it was also a motivator as they wanted their children to know family members.

Living Situations

Nearly all of the participants left the child welfare system ill-prepared to live in stable arrangements; for most this has meant being homeless for long periods of time. During the eighteen-month project, all of the participants struggled with day-to-day living concerns, which impacted their ability to fully engage in the project. For example, five participants became homeless and relied upon the assistance of the contract workers to find housing. Two participants were victims of domestic violence in their living situation and one lived with

birth family that he supported to the exclusion of his own goals and needs. One participant rented an apartment and lived with no furniture. Two of the participants felt forced to live with roommates that they either did not like or who jeopardized their living arrangements. Some participants made poor choices and had limited boundaries, and consequently spent time with people who took advantage of them.

One third of the participants in the project were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-nine and thus had pursued higher education and obtained better paying and more stable jobs. These older participants had fewer crises related to disruptions in their living arrangements.

Education

Nineteen of the participants had either graduated from college or were enrolled in higher education and one participant was working on her GED. All of the participants saw higher education as a means to a better life and were very goal oriented. In part, this may be because one of the criteria for participating in the project was having acted as an advocate for permanency. The participants all desired to be role models for other youth in foster care and to affect changes in the foster care system.

Employment

In order to support themselves, the participants held a variety of jobs, including waitress, hotel manager, and rental car staff, as well as various part-time positions. Jobs held by those with more education and skill levels included lawyer, Wall Street manager, director of youth training, ILSP worker, and support counselor to the homeless and families in the system. Many of the positions reflect the participants' desire to be of service to underprivileged and/or foster youth. When participants were unemployed or underemployed, the contract workers made referrals and assisted as possible in career counseling and job referrals. The contract workers utilized their networks to locate job vacancies for the participants. Of course, during times of unemployment and/or housing changes, the participants had limited time to focus on family search and engagement. At times, contact would be lost with participants as they went through these changes.

Emotional Issues and Barriers

Project participants generally had not worked through the grief and loss they experienced both before and during their time in foster care. To engage successfully in the project, participants now had to confront and deal with this grief and loss in healthier ways. To help, contract workers provided supportive counseling and made referrals to services. Even so, several participants made only limited progress with this issue.

For example, one participant was not able to maintain sobriety for any significant length of time, despite substantial and repeated treatment. He became suicidal when he relapsed, engaged in at-risk behaviors, and was homeless at least three times, mugged, arrested, and evicted. Although he reconnected with family, even moving in with a sister and her three daughters, without sobriety it will be difficult for him to reap the benefits of these relationships.

Other participants had little experience developing or sustaining long-term healthy relationships, or the skills that maintain them. In some cases, a participant might appear confident publicly, but be paralyzed by shyness in more intimate interactions. This meant participants had difficulty engaging with the contract workers and with the connections that were located.

Some had unreasonable expectations in relationships, seeing actions as controlling rather than caring. Some often made assumptions that people would not want to see them and others had unresolved anger toward family members that impacted their willingness to meet and reconnect. Some put only one foot in the project, preferring to not risk failure.

Various coping methods were utilized by the participants to deal with their emotions. One participant talked constantly on the cell phone as a security device to not be 100 percent present and not feel abandoned and alone but rather connected and significant.

Participant's Attitude toward Permanency

The participant's attitude toward permanency was recorded at the time of intake and at closure. The scale of measurement was:

- wants a permanent connection

- is ambivalent

- does not want a permanent connection

- do not yet know the participant's attitude about forming a permanent connection.

This information was obtained on nineteen of the twenty cases.

At intake, one participant indicated that she did not want a permanent connection (but did want information), two participants indicated ambivalence, and sixteen indicated the desire for a permanent connection. Although all participants experienced some ambivalence as the process unfolded, the two participants who initially indicated ambivalence remained in that position much longer, and indeed, this attitude appeared to delay engagement in the process for at least a year. After connections were made, one was no longer ambivalent but the other remained unsure and only reached out to the connection on a limited basis.

The one participant who initially did not want a connection later changed her mind and a connection was made for her.

One participant who initially wanted a connection ended feeling somewhat ambivalent after a reconnection was made and that person suddenly died.

Level on the Permanency Scale Initially and Ending

The participant's permanency levels were measured initially and at closure utilizing the following scale:

1) Participant has no existing or potential lifelong connections.

2) Participant has a potential lifelong connection but no commitment has been made.

3) Participant has a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

4) A change in legal status – adoption, guardianship, or reunification – is in process.

5) Adoption, guardianship, or reunification has occurred. (Because of the age of the participants and their own desires, it was not expected that there would be a change in legal status, but in case this would take place, the option was recorded.)

Again, data was obtained on nineteen participants both initially and at closure. As seen on the chart below, initially seven participants had no existing or potential lifelong connection, four participants had a potential lifelong connection but no commitment had been made, and eight felt they had one lifelong connection to a caring adult. The eight participants who had one lifelong connection to a caring adult were seeking additional connections, mostly biological relatives. At closure, fourteen participants had a lifelong connection to a caring adult. Four participants had established a potential lifelong connection but no commitment had been made as of yet. Note that the four participants who had "potential connections" at the outset of the project all had committed connections at the project's end (and the four post-project "potential connections" all began the project without a connection). Also, all eight participants that started the project with connections increased their number of connections. Only one participant had no existing or potential lifelong connection. Interesting, she had indicated initially that she did not want a permanent connection. She did, however, want to find family information for the development of her own identity, which was accomplished.

Permanency Scale Data

Chart: Permanency Scale Data — bar chart comparing PRE (gray) and POST (orange) values across three categories.

	PRE	POST
No Connection	~7	~1
Potential Connection	~4	~3.5
Connection	~8	~14

Legend: ■ PRE ■ POST
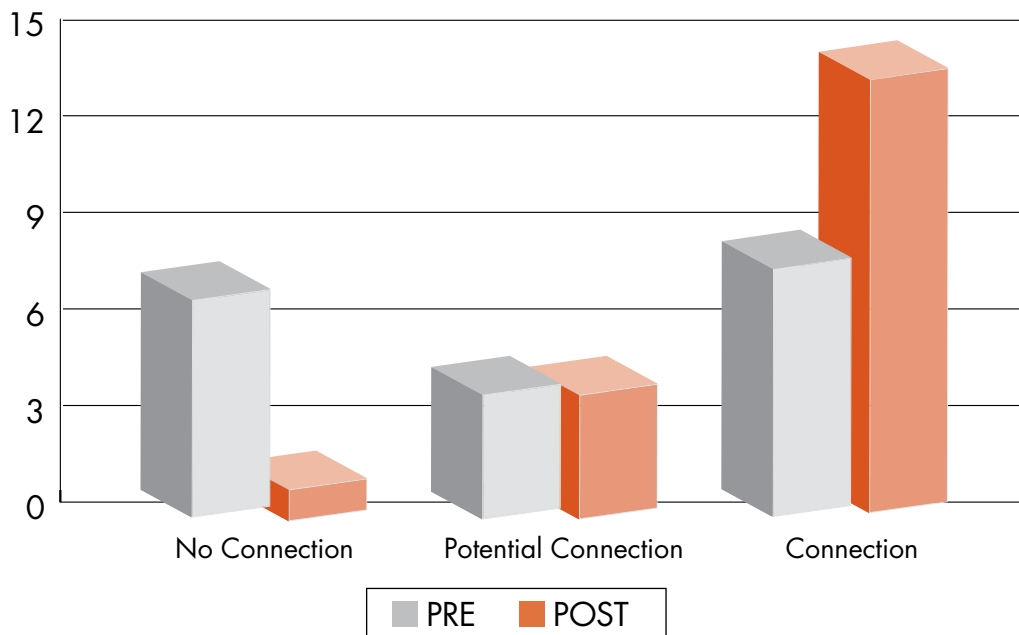
Participant Goals

As the model stressed, the goals of the participants were central to the family finding and engagement work. To monitor this, the initial goal was recorded. As the process unfolded, each quarterly progress report included information regarding progress toward that goal or changes in the goal as well as the reasons for the change.

Many of the participants were very vague initially about their goals, which were often stated in terms such as:

- wanting a mother figure

- just wanting to learn about the process

- wanting someone who would be like a mother who would be supportive of her goals and dreams

- having little hope of finding someone to be an emotional connection, although that would be nice

- wanting a connection that would completely accept him for who he is – a transgender person

- wanting some permanent relationships that would fulfill her desire for her child to have family relationships

For those participants, the process focused on exploring possibilities in order to establish and clarify initial goals. This often took a significant period of time due to ambivalence of the participants and their lack of availability to engage in the process.

Six of the participants were very clear on their goals, usually naming one specific person that they wished to locate. In all of those cases, work progressed much more rapidly. However, in all of those situations, once participants were connected to that one individual and because that experience was positive and successful, they expanded their goals to include searching for others. Usually once one family member was found, contact could be established with many other family members. As the participants learned that in almost all cases, their family members had never forgotten them, talked about them frequently at family events, and in some cases had initiated unsuccessful searches for the participants, they became more willing to take risks and to seek others.

Impact of Search on Participants

Some of the participants made remarkable growth as they struggled to attain their goals. For example, one young woman utilized the process to evaluate her mother's strengths and to appreciate them instead of rejecting her as she had done in the past. Another who had the goal of finding out exact information regarding her father learned that he is in prison. She then was willing to take another look at her aunt who in the past had demonstrated concern for the participant by always providing her with a bed and hot meals when needed. The participant was angry at her for not keeping her out of the system. By utilizing counseling from the contract worker, she came to understand why her aunt could not take her at that time and to accept what she previously saw as smothering behavior as normal caring.

Another participant whose birth family continued to be involved with drugs wanted a connection who had no children and who would love the participant unconditionally. Since this was the goal established by the participant, efforts were made to find that type of connection. When efforts were unsuccessful, with help from her counselor she was able to explore what

it meant to her to have to share a connection. Since the participant had young children she was able to realize that people have the ability to love many people and she made a wonderful connection with a person with one adult son.

Some of the young adults in the project were confronted with challenging/life-changing experiences, and benefited from the support the project offered. One participant, who had indicated that she had little hope of finding someone to connect to emotionally, was rejected by her first two choices. With the support of the contract worker, she was willing to look at herself and see that she played a part in the negative feelings that existed. She then changed her goal to reconnecting with a past county worker. That person, when located, indicated a love for the participant and a desire to be her permanent connection. The relationship was growing but the past county worker suddenly and unexpectedly died. The participant grieved for months but needed the support of the contract worker and the group to do this emotional work. She indicated that for a time she felt love, commitment, and honesty, and even though it was for a short period of time she realized that a connection can occur with the right person. At the end of the project she had been connected to an individual that she had previously known on a professional basis and they are beginning to expand their friendship with the possibility of it becoming a permanent connection.

Analysis of Goals

Because the project was participant-driven there were as many different goals as there were participants. The types of goals fell into two loosely defined categories: participants searching for family members and participants hoping to find a non-relative "parent" or "lifelong mentor" figure. The word "mentor" was used by the participants as it was a word they were familiar with and comfortable using. However, as they described the type of relationship they desired, it was apparent that they were hoping for a relationship much broader than the one typically provided by a mentor. It appeared that they desired someone more like a parent figure who was committed to a lifelong relationship, but many were uncomfortable utilizing the word "parent." Several of the participants looked for people from more than one category and the searches often evolved as participants found out information about their family (or themselves).

The most common participant goal was to locate one or more family members. Fifteen of the nineteen participants indicated that they wanted to locate a relative that they had either lost touch with or had never known. Five wanted to locate their biological fathers and two wanted to find their biological mothers. Many participants were interested in locating an aunt, uncle, grandparent, or cousin they remembered fondly from their childhood or in making new relationships with a "side" of the family they had never known. Through the project, fourteen of the fifteen participants searching for relatives located

at least some of the sought-after family members. For many participants, they met these relatives for the first time during the project. The only participant that didn't locate a relative called off the search after some early unsuccessful attempts to find a family member. It should be noted that one participant for whom family members were found was not interested in pursuing relationships with the newly found relatives.

Nine of the nineteen participants were interested in locating non-relative, "parent-like," or "mentor" figures with whom they could develop a lifelong relationship. Finding and establishing these relationships within the time frame of the project proved more challenging. During the project, connections were located for eight of the nine participants; however two of the eight, possibly because they were still working through grief and loss issues, were reluctant to call their new relationships "lifelong connections." Unfortunately one of the eight "connected" participants lost her connection during the project when the person died suddenly.

After succeeding in searches, a few of the participants decided to attempt to locate friends or connections from the past that would probably not fall under the category of "parent-like" or "lifelong mentor." Three of these four participants located these individuals and reconnected to friends from the past.

In summary, the one participant who was ambivalent about pursuing a permanent connection accomplished her original goal of locating and learning about her family. Of the other eighteen participants (all of whom desired permanent connections with either family or "parent-like/mentor" figures), seventeen found connections, though two were reluctant to call the new relationship a "lifelong connection." One participant, sadly, formed a permanent connection with a caring adult who suddenly died.

Number of Connections Made

At closure, data was available for nineteen of the twenty participants. For those nineteen individuals:

- 139 new permanent connections had been made with biological family members

- 42 new permanent connections were made with non-biological family members

- 181 new permanent connections were made, for a mean of 9.52 new permanent connections for each participant (see below)

Number of Bio-Family Connections
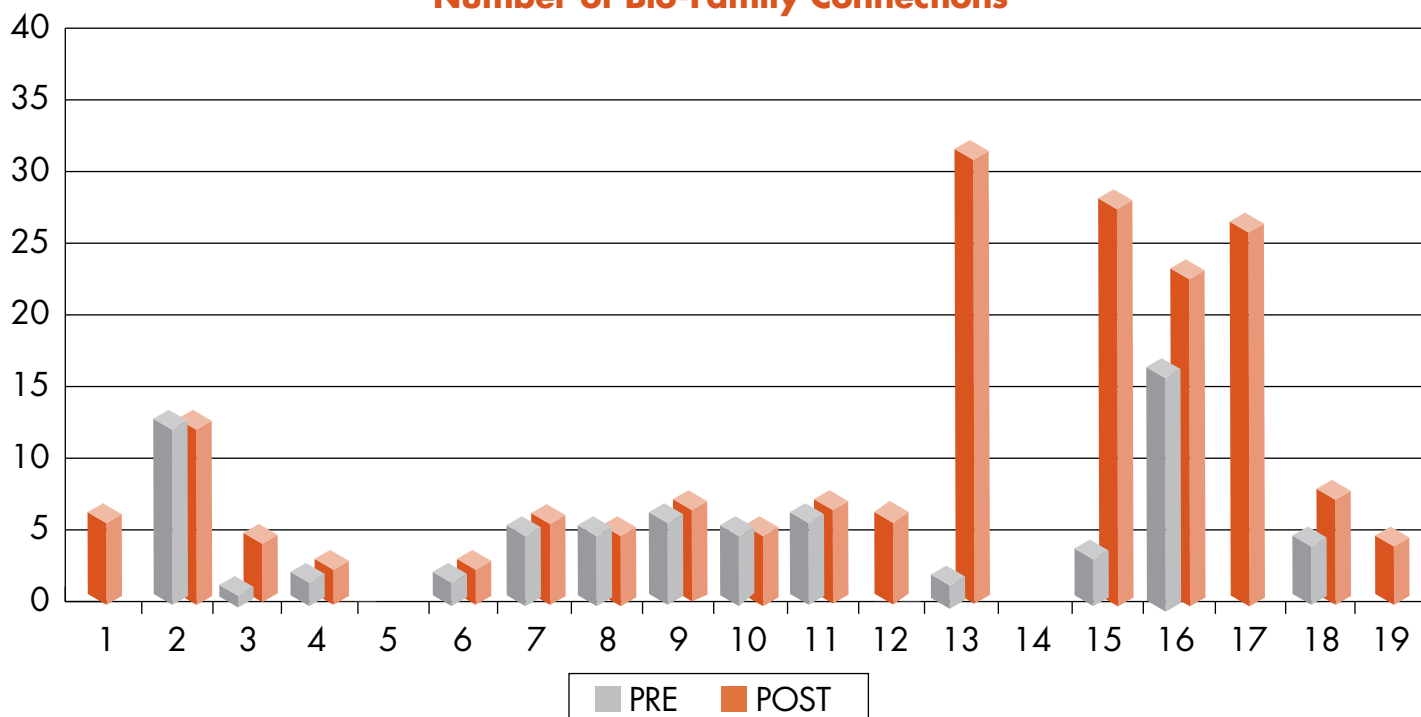
Number of Non-Bio-Family Connections
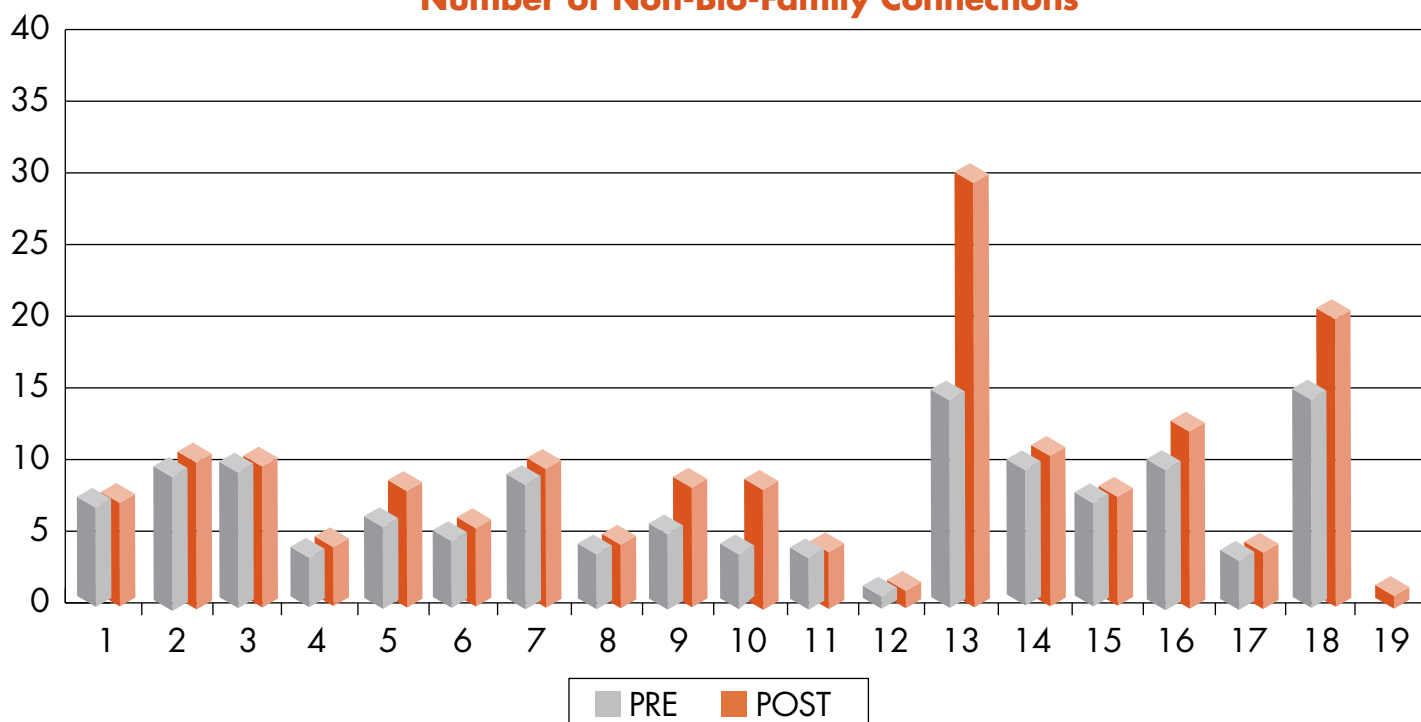
Time Study

Adolescent Connections, Project UPLIFT found a direct correlation between the number of permanent connections established and how the contract workers utilized their time. The most effective use of time was talking with the youth; the second was talking with the connections. The least effective use of time was reviewing the old files. Use of time was also studied in this project. However, since it became very difficult to obtain old files, this item was not an issue as far as use of time. It was a service issue for those few participants who had gaps in information about their history and whose goal was to be able to learn more about their past. An average of 58 hours was spent per case for all activities including travel, visiting participants, searching, and speaking with connections. For five of the participants, the average time spent per case was 112 hours with one of the participants receiving 205 hours of service. All five of these participants lived a significant distance from the contract worker and two of these participants also had mental health issues, including suicidal ideations. The average time per case for fourteen of the participants was 39 hours. These hours do not include report writing and meetings.

Importance of the Project to the Participants in Their View

At closure the participants were asked if the project had been of assistance to them in developing connections in their life and if they thought the project was important. Nine participants responded. Eight participants felt that this type of project is very important for young adults who have emancipated from foster care without a connection. One participant felt it is important. Eight participants answered that the project had been of assistance in developing connections in their lives. Some elaborated:

- "[It is] vital to self-identity."

- "Feeling alone will hinder you the rest of life."

- "It has assisted me in strengthening connections that I have in my life that are healthy, and just being able to talk and process really helped—however, it does stir up a lot of emotion and now that it is ending that's hard."

Effect on Participant's Self-Concept

Participants were impacted in these ways:

Personal and Cultural Identity

One participant who is half Chinese had no connection to her heritage but after being connected to her Chinese brother, his wife, and family is now slowly incorporating this into her life. When she is with her brother she reports feeling "happy, strange but wonderful."

Personal and Gender Identity

Another participant who has felt judged by his biological family because of his gender identity ironically found the acceptance he was seeking when he reconnected with his father who is in prison.

Personal Identity

- One participant met all the members of his paternal family and he was very touched when they reported that they had never forgotten him. His grandmother reported mentioning his name at every family get-together. He experienced lots of sadness because they were not in his life sooner and that he had to experience so much loneliness.

- Another participant found answers and was relieved to find that the mental health issues of her biological mother were not as daunting as she had been told all her life by her adoptive family. She witnessed a family that had managed to stay connected through hardships stemming from mental health issues, alcoholism, and system intervention.

- Another participant found the location of her father's grave, learned that he had attempted to get her back when she was placed in foster care, and acquired many pictures of him, all of which she stated were very important to her. She also met her grandmother and stated, "It is just cool to have a grandmother and to learn important medical information."

- One participant was grief-stricken to learn that his mother had been murdered. However, he also was positively impacted by learning that his father attempted to reunify. After meeting his sister and her three children he commented on how wonderful it was to be called "Uncle" for the first time.

- One participant who repeatedly expressed the fear that no one would want to have a relationship with her and who felt she was only a "burden to people" began to feel her own self-worth after being connected to a person with whom she felt love, commitment, and honesty. Even though that person suddenly died, the participant verbalized the realization that a connection can occur with the right person.

- Another participant began with the goal of finding a person to fill the needs she felt as a "motherless child." She reconnected to a foster mother and they see each other regularly. The participant realized that since she is now an adult her efforts should be directed toward improving and enhancing current relationships in her life. She began to see her aunts, uncles, and cousins through a different lens. She came to understand that people have limitations and in order to be in relationship

with others, she must accept those limitations. She is now able to be with people from a position of strength, whereas initially she felt weak and was hoping people would provide her with all that a parent would have provided and would make up for all she lost in the past.

- One participant suspected that he might have a sister a few years older than he. During the process of searching for her, he met his grandmother and confirmed that he has a sister. Later, his sister got his phone number from their grandmother and called him. This was profound for him and he now has a comfortable and friendly relationship with her. He describes it as a relationship like none he has ever had. He described the immediate bond they instantly felt with each other.

Effective Searching Strategies

No one tool or method can be solely utilized to locate connections. Since files were not available for all but two of the participants, this shows that the participants themselves can be utilized as the source for the beginning of a search effort.

Since US Search (www.USSearch.com) was available as a contributor of service to this project, it was utilized most frequently. When no current phone numbers could be found, letter writing campaigns to listed neighbors proved successful for two participants. US Search at times did not provide needed information and other search engines and tools were important. Also, since all search engines only go back for twenty years, for older participants other searching methods are critical. US Searches were utilized for twelve of the participants, Yahoo! People Search (http://people.yahoo.com) for two participants, ZabaSearch (www.zabasearch.com) for two participants, Peoplefinders (www.Peoplefinders.com) for one, Google (www.google.com) for one, and MySpace (www.myspace.com) for one. The White Pages (www.whitepages.com) was successful for one participant.

The most successful tool for two of the participants was the death certificates of their fathers. Other resources were the San Leandro Historical Library, a Bay area Chinese historian, San Bruno Immigration Archives, and the Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Other sources utilized were the prison system, schools (contacted directly), and networking with resources such as service providers for the LGBTQ community.

Conclusions

The Emancipated Youth Connections Project was developed and funded to assist twenty young adults who left the foster care system without sustained relationships to a caring adult. The project began with a service model based on helping youth in foster care find permanent connections, making adjustments along the way to adapt to an older population.

EYCP was tremendously successful in finding family or other caring adults to be lifelong connections for the participants in the project. For the nineteen participants for whom data was available during this eighteen-month period, 139 permanent connections were made with biological family members, and 42 connections were made with non-related adults, resulting in 181 new connections. These results demonstrate that permanency can be fostered for young adults who have left the child welfare system without permanency. Regardless of whether the participants who found relatives will be in regular contact with them or not, the young adults in EYCP felt that participating was a good thing. Many of them know more about their history than they did before, have met relatives, clarified their goals, and made contingency plans for their children either with relatives or other identified permanent connections. In addition to this, the participants said that having someone concentrate on helping them in this specific way for a period of eighteen months was an invaluable support to them and their self-esteem.

Implications for Child Welfare Practice

These results also clearly demonstrate the unexplored capacity of the participants' family and non-related social networks that were not developed during the participants' time in foster care. It is reasonable to assume that, had these 181 new connections been formed while the participants were still in care:

- Some of the participants would have left the system to a permanent outcome (reunification, adoption, guardianship) rather than exiting care at age eighteen left to fend for themselves.

- Even if they didn't achieve permanency, they certainly would know that they had caring relationships with people beyond those people who were paid to care for them.

- More opportunities would have existed for youth to work through grief and loss issues, and to have the experience, while under the supervision of caring adults, of participating in and developing lifelong relationships, which would have promoted greater skill development.

It should also be noted that some of the challenges encountered in the project would be somewhat diminished when working with foster youth: the youth would be younger and presumably less impacted by their time in care, mental health services would be available to help the youth work through their relationship issues, and the problem of "lost histories" due to lack of files would be solved. Clearly the ramifications of this gap in child welfare practice significantly impact the youth whom the system is charged to protect and serve. The opportunities to improve practice and reap the subsequent benefits are profound.

Another implication of these project results calls into question the basis of which young people aging out of the foster care system are seen as and termed "success stories." Many of the young adults were viewed as shining star success stories which validated the efficacy of Independent Living Skills Programs (ILSP). Yet almost to a person, these young adults were lonely, had difficulty trusting, felt an emptiness impacting their daily living, and were often lacking in the acumen and skills needed to make and sustain successful relationships. Yet their skill sets and acumen in other areas were highly developed. Permanency must be seen as an outcome for all youth in the child welfare system, inclusive of ILSP. Youth that exit care without permanency can no longer be viewed as "success stories" by these programs or their evaluators.

Key issues arose during the evolution of the service model. For agencies whose core mission is focused on youth in care, adjustments may be necessary in order to effectively serve young adults who have left care. Beliefs and attitudes of administrators and staff about those being served and how best to serve them may require review, reflection, and revision.

Communication, negotiation, and accommodation between agency boards and leadership who have traditionally prioritized the organization's financial resources and attention focused on youth may be necessary when this type of initiative is undertaken. Agency practice re safety needs and the type of oversight required for young adults versus youth in care may need to be reviewed and revised, given the changes in circumstances between a youth in foster care placement and a young adult without a significant permanent connection in his or her life. Shifts in recruitment strategies from finding parents of teens to finding caring adults who are able and willing to engage in a variety of ways, such as parent to adult child, lifelong mentor, or at times as more of a peer, may be required.

LESSONS LEARNED

1) Individual and group support for participants and connections

When we began the project the goal was to provide group support for the participants in the Oakland, California area. Although it was unknown where participants would reside, it was expected that most would be in that vicinity. We assumed group support, along with individual support, was sufficient to assist motivated young adults to achieve their goals. We discovered we had underestimated the impact of the experience on many in the group: many participants did not live in the Oakland vicinity, and thus more group support and a mental health component was necessary to help participants support each other and remain stable during this challenging period.

It was vital that one-on-one counseling support was available to participants during the process. It appeared that the young adults who emerged "successfully" from the foster care system were people who defined themselves in terms of survival skills and "not needing anyone." At least in the past, the ILSP model supported this world view and coping strategy. A project like EYCP is a direct assault upon this defense and it is not surprising, in hindsight, that there was a major disruption in the participants' equilibrium and sense of well-being.

Besides providing support, group meetings can offer challenges for participants to take risks in their own processes as they see others doing so.

With the understanding that the process will be disruptive, workers needed to have regular and frequent meeting times available and to prepare the participants for the emotional rollercoaster. Ongoing supportive services may be needed for a year or more as the search for connections is a catalyst for other unresolved issues.

Although EYCP workers believed all of the participants could have benefited from therapy, they (i.e., the participants) were reluctant to accept referrals, in part due to their lengthy and sometimes negative experience with therapy while in care. Therefore, it was important for workers to be skilled in assisting with emotional issues while at the same time maintaining clear boundaries in their roles.

Some of the permanent connections desired more support from the project, and yet the young adults made the determinations of what type of engagement contract workers would have with connections as the relationships evolved. It is believed that more attention and support would have been extended to connections if the project continued to evolve. This area may need more attention during the planning and design phase in future projects.

2) Range of services/locally based services

The project was designed with the assumption that we could serve young adults all over the state and in other states using various consultants. Challenges with regard to distances, knowing community services, and ongoing access to the young adults during crises increased our consultant time and travel and may have resulted in less than ideal service provisions at times.

The service of finding connections for young adults should be located in a full-service agency in close proximity to the participants. The participants needed to be able to meet with their worker weekly. An agency with a service team model provides participants with a greater array of other services, such as assistance with employment issues. Also, if safety becomes a concern due to risky behaviors which often escalate during the time of reconnection, risk is shared within the agency and there is an ability to provide emergency services.

3) Flexible process/plan which includes grief and loss work

It is impossible to hurry the permanency process and providers must be flexible about time frames in order to meet the needs of the participants. At the same time, because programs have limited resources, it is necessary to plan/design the work to achieve a gradual conclusion that will be satisfying to each client. While initially the project was intended to last twelve months, CPYP recognized that an extension of service was necessary to allow the participants to work through these issues in order to attain the connectedness they sought.

A plan established at the outset would include a relatively clear beginning, middle, and end including details regarding termination of the relationship between the social worker and participant. Because the participants have experienced so many loses, without this approach, they will again feel abandoned. The ending should not occur without finding a connection and building support around that connection.

It usually takes longer than anticipated due to the history and pain a participant must work through to get to the place where she or he can begin to engage in permanency. There is so much grief and loss that it is a barrier to permanency and one cannot get to permanency without going through the grief and loss. Finding names, facts, and details is secondary to working through old issues,

fear/ambivalence about relationships, and the unresolved identity questions that result from separation from family at an early age. A connections project needs to be integrated with therapy/counseling, either provided by the person helping with the search or with another trained professional involved from the beginning.

Connecting is a process that takes a different length of time for every participant. It has an ebb and flow with participants talking in depth about relationships and people (often for the first time in their lives) and then taking time to absorb that discussion. As they sort through and talk about the past and the people to whom they felt connected their goals become clearer and they eventually are able to risk engaging in the reconnection process. For example, after lengthy discussions one participant reported that he had called an older friend and had asked her to be his permanent connection: "I never thought she would want to be a permanent connection for me. But then I thought, I guess I can just ask her." With a smile he reported that she said yes.

4) **Participant control of the process**
Our philosophy is to provide the opportunity for youth to be central in planning their permanency process. It was expected that with young adults it would be even more important to give them maximum decision making power and control. It was a learning process to meet this need and at the same time not have the effectiveness of the work compromised. It was also learned that one way of balancing these two issues is to define in writing the purpose of the project, the process, and the role of the worker as clearly as possible and provide this to the participants at the beginning. This assisted them in understanding that at times the role of the worker was to take the lead on certain aspects of the work, such as making initial contact with connections.

A clear program outline also assisted participants in having a clearer understanding of the project and made the beginning contact stages quicker and smoother.

5) **Understanding ambivalence/maintaining contact**
The extent of the participants' ambivalence was underestimated. After learning about the details of the project, some of the participants were reluctant to join. We continued to follow up with them for several months and in fact some then elected to participate. It was important to respect this resistance and wait until they were ready. They understood at some level, consciously or unconsciously, that the work would require emotional insight for which they needed to prepare themselves. At the same time, workers had to understand the very real time constraints of the participants who already had very busy adult lives with family and work responsibilities.

Staff had to be persistent to maintain contact with the participants. Because of the transitional position that many of the young adults were currently facing, their lives were not settled. As they seek jobs and places to live, they are experiencing moves, sometimes multiple moves, which necessitates that the project be flexible. With address changes, phone numbers change also and unless the young adult has a cell number, contact can be lost temporarily. Sometimes cell phone service is discontinued due to the participant being unable to pay her or his bill. What appear to be delays in service provision are part of young adult life and thus a longer period of service time and more flexibility may be required.

6) **Opportunity to learn relationship skills**
A new model was needed to assist emancipated young adults with basic relationship and attachment skills. This process needed to be different than the process used with children or youth, where a professional finds the family, even if it is birth family or known family, brings the family to the young person, provides limited attachment work, and then hopes for the best. With the young adults in the project, involving them in group work seemed to be the most effective method due to their trust in one another. The project had geographic barriers that limited the opportunities for the participants to participate in the group process. These barriers would best be avoided in any future program design.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) **Develop a support team for each participant**
The development of a team around each participant is a vital step and one that cannot be circumvented. The participant should be central to the team process. For the participants with a support team, more resources were available when crises relating to family finding and engagement arose. Also, when the project ended, those participants continued to have support of some of their team members.

2) **Participants and connections require thorough preparation and attention**
Because of the age of the participants, more emphasis was placed on encouraging them to determine how, when, and by whom actual contact with the potential connection would be made. Once connections were located and stated their interest to engage with the participant, they were coached by contract workers to initiate contact, as participants appeared to have a more positive response when the family member reached out to them first. As the relationship develops, it is also important to help both the participant and her or his connection redefine what the relationship might look like compared to what they envisioned, and to clearly

define the permanent relationship so people do not have false expectations. For one of the participants, the worker located a connection who was a very busy professional. Because her time was very limited, it was important that the participant knew when she could count on seeing the connection.

3) **Service providers must believe and persevere**

Often participants are unable to believe that it is possible for anyone to care for them and thus it is vital that the worker BELIEVE that someone can. For example, after one participant's paternal family was found, the participant stated that she never really believed that it would be possible to find her family. She just went along with the worker because the worker believed so strongly that it could happen. It is uncommon for young adults who had a limited number of caring adults in their lives to believe that they are loveable and deserve someone who will make a commitment. They fear that they are a burden to people and hesitate to begin new relationships or to ask for commitments.

4) **Service providers must be well trained, experienced, and supported**

The skill level of social workers assigned to support young adults to achieve permanency as well as the quality of support and supervision they receive are critical factors to the success of this initiative. Skilled and experienced master's level social workers who received quality supervision were challenged by the issues that arose during the project, which included the impact on the young adult's identity and mental health. Workers are required to provide a balanced approach between persistence and flexibility. Skills and judgments about how and when to help young adults face their fears and when to allow for integration and reflection are key to successful support. At times these young adults entered crisis situations in their financial status, or were becoming potentially harmful to themselves. Successful resolution of these crises required a very high level of social work.

5) **Foster youth need accurate information about their family**

During time in foster care, it is important that youth be provided information about their past and that their questions be answered. The facts are extremely useful to them in their identity formation. By filling in the missing puzzle pieces of their lives and learning information that is part of their story, they are better equipped to go forward with their hopes and dreams.

Often youth have misinformation. For example, one participant believed from the age of sixteen that his mother was dead. After searching, the worker located her and a reconnection was made.

6) **Consider a variety of permanent relationships**

It is important that the permanency process be client-led and a variety of permanent relationships are considered. For example, although mentor relationships are often temporary, it is possible to connect youth to mentors who will make lifelong commitments. One participant specifically wanted this type of relationship with a role model/mentor to help her achieve her hopes and dreams of earning an MSW degree from UC Berkeley and working as a social worker. There was no one in her family who could be supportive of her educational and career goals. What a permanent connection is to one person may look entirely different to another. Listen!!! And the client will lead the way to the needed connection.

7) **Importance of advocacy opportunities/foster parent relationships**

Opportunity should be provided on a broader scale for foster care youth to be trained and function as advocates. Acting as advocates and role models for others motivated the participants in the EYCP project to make better choices for themselves. Also, relationships that were established with other youth in an advocacy role often became supportive and "like family." Youth who had a permanent connection with a foster parent seemed to be more optimistic and confident than other participants and more able to seek reconnections with others.

8) **It is NEVER too late, but why wait!**

Permanent connections were found for all of the participants in the project who desired them. However, years of loneliness could have been avoided if family finding and engagement services had been provided for these emancipated foster youth while they were still in the system. The emotional benefit of this to participants is immeasurable, not to mention the potential cost saving counties might have experienced if lengths of time in care had been shortened.

A. PRELIMINARY PLANNING STEPS

Research support services and develop a method of tracking referrals of participants to service providers.

1) **Bring interested collaborators to the table**
Interagency collaboration in the project was necessary as it was expected that participants would be scattered throughout California, and CPYP did not have the staff resources to provide service to all of the potential participants. It was important to utilize the already existing relationships with agencies that had demonstrated success in being champions for youth permanency, had staff experienced in providing permanency services to youth in the system, and had the ability to relate to youth/young adults. The collaboration resulted in wider skills and talents being brought to the table.

2) **Determine scope of service and profile of professional staff needed**
It was important to quickly determine the number and location of participants that could be served, the type of services they would likely need, and the profile of professional staff that would fit best with the needs of the participants and project. CPYP decided that there were sufficient resources to provide service to twenty participants in the state of California. The services would include family finding and engagement, a support group, and individual counseling support. Contract workers from two of the collaborating agencies in different geographical locations in the state and CPYP would provide these services.

CPYP also developed a profile of a prospective worker's skills and beliefs that were essential for success based on lessons learned from Project Uplift's work:

- tenacity

- having the belief that people change

- having the belief that relationships are important

- ability to be open and forthright about issues

- ability to communicate clearly

- ability to accept people's ambivalence and help them move through it

- willingness to challenge one's own beliefs (75 percent of the problem is adult attitudes regarding older youth and permanency)

- ability to be able to see youth for their positive qualities

Initial meetings were held to discuss what specific services each collaborator was prepared to provide. CPYP brought collaborators to the table who employed workers with the skill and belief set noted above. Contract workers also need experience and skills in providing services to participants who were gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, and/or questioning. Sexuality issues impacted the reaction by connections when they were contacted and participants were nervous about revealing their sexual identity as they were fearful of rejection.

Prospective staff were also expected to have an understanding of cultural issues and to be able to assist participants in strengthening connections that would bring people an understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage. Culture, here, is used in its broadest sense to go beyond race and ethnicity to encompass the spectrum of history, traditions, values, and beliefs that pertain to this individual in the context of his or her family and environment.

3) Establish participant eligibility criteria
During the initial meetings, the planning team decided on the following eligibility criteria:

- the youth/young adult wants to learn more about permanency connections and the service she or he may receive from the project

- the youth/young adult is actively involved in endorsing permanency as the right of all foster youth

- the youth/young adult has been or is involved with CPYP through the California Permanency for Youth Task Force, the production of digital stories, advancing legislation, being a trainer in the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project, or in some related activity

The established criteria may have created a unique population group as eligible persons were individuals who possessed the maturity, skill, and interest to volunteer at a formal organization dedicated to permanency for current foster youth.

Even though the participant population was unique in the way indicated above, project participants shared the common characteristic of all foster youth who do not have permanency – loneliness. One administrator expressed it in this way: "There is such pain; there is a large empty hole and we cannot begin to fill it up with family until we have helped it heal. I think we learned that even in these successful young people, their history

in foster care has left them very isolated and very, very lonely. The success they have achieved has come from their independence and as we introduced the concept of permanency it has stressed and in some cases cracked the foundation that had sustained them."

4) Secure funding
The director of the California Permanency for Youth Project contacted a foundation that had been supportive in the past, discussed possible funding for EYCP, and received an indication of interest. The EYCP project leader submitted a funding application which was approved.

5) Develop contracts with service partners
It was necessary to write contracts with service partners in general terms as it was unknown initially where participants would be located, how many hours of service would be required per participant, and how much travel would be required.

6) Hold initial planning meeting with service partners
After contracts were developed with partners (Family Builders by Adoption and EMQ Children and Family Services), a meeting was held with them to review the grant application to assure that all partners understood their roles and obligations. It was decided to assign cases by geographic areas.

7) Conduct consistency training
Following the planning meeting, a day was scheduled for consistency training with all of the contract workers to assure that each participant received comparable services based on excellence.

8) Develop referral form and conduct outreach
The project leader met with or provided referral forms (see Appendix P) to representatives in positions to identify eligible participants, such as California CASA staff, the legislative and policy coordinator for the California Youth Connection, and the director of the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project, Bay Area Academy/San Francisco State University. Information about the project was provided at that time with the request that the agency contacts make referrals to the project.

Many times referral sources did not have enough information to fill out the referral form completely nor had they discussed the project with the potential participant. In those situations it was necessary to make contact to explain the project and have the participant complete the referral form.

Because many of the referred young adults had not yet achieved relative stability – some did not have regular employment, some had erratic living situations, and some were unable to keep their cell phone payments current – it proved difficult to make contact. Therefore, it was necessary to continue to seek referrals for several months in order to obtain the twenty participants.

When the project lead received a completed referral form, she contacted the potential participant and explained the project in more detail. At that time, she determined the most appropriate contract worker in terms of geography and skills and sent the referral to him or her.

9) **Develop intake form**
The project lead developed an intake form (see Appendix Q) to guide the partners in obtaining common information regarding participants that could be utilized to develop an effective action plan, and to collect data for the final evaluation. The intake form included basic demographic information as well as information regarding birth family, past foster parents, placement history (including number and type of placements), time line of events after leaving care, important past and current relationships and connections (including professional ones), interests and hobbies, current issues such as employment, mental health, basic needs, etc., barriers, and an initial plan including the participant's desired outcome.

10) **Develop assessment tools**
It was important to measure outcomes, such as the number of connections found for each participant, but also to look at the emotional impact of the project on each participant.

To do so the work group decided to utilize the Hopelessness Scale (Appendix R) and the Youth Permanency Scale (Appendix S) developed by the Edgewood Institute for the Study of Community-Based Services, Edgewood Center for Children and Families. (Some of the tools that were considered but not used are: the Children's Dispositional Hope Scale developed by C.R. Snyder, the Personal Growth Initiative Scale by Christine Robitschek, the Gratitude Questionnaire by Michael McCullough, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale by Ed Diener.)

11) **Obtain search tools and develop a method of tracking searches**
Some of the search methods used were: Internet searching, case file mining, reviewing birth/death certificates, contacting past caseworkers, accessing prison system databases, placing newspaper ads, writing letters, and calling the Indian Child Welfare Act Tribal Contact. US Search generously contributed its services for this

project pro bono due to the CEO having a concern and commitment to this project as well as a relationship with partners in the project. Other Internet sites utilized were Yahoo People Search (http://people.yahoo.com), ZabaSearch (www.zabasearch.com), Peoplefinders (www.Peoplefinders.com), Google (www.google.com), MySpace (www.myspace.com), and Merlin Information Services (www.merlindata.com).

A reporting form (Appendix T) was developed in order to track the number of searches as well as the results.

12) **Research support services and develop a method of tracking referrals of participants to service providers**
EYCP staff were aware that one of the barriers they faced was the lack of mental health professionals who are permanency competent. A form (see Appendix U) was developed to track what referrals were made and if they were utilized by the participants. Some of the service providers identified were:

- A Home Within – pro bono counseling

- Pacific Center – support services for LGBT youth, including school-based Gay-Straight Alliance club support, social events, the Safer Schools Project, and mental health counseling

- Friends Outside – transportation and assistance for families of prisoners

- First Place for Youth (formerly First Place Fund for Youth) – housing assistance

- Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS) – housing and employment

- Lambda Legal – legal assistance and advocacy to the LGBTQ community

- Job Corps

13) Deal with factors that impact the project (mobility of participants, staff changes, flexible time frames, etc.)
Even with good planning, issues will arise that will have potential impact on the services being provided. To minimize the negative effect on participants, it is critical to deal with these issues as quickly as possible.

One issue EYCP encountered was the effect the young adults' mobility had on their participation in the project: some young adults were seeking jobs, some were entering into new relationships, some were trying to find a satisfactory place to live, and some were homeless. During the project, many of the young adults moved, including some long distance moves across the state or the country. When one participant moved to the East Coast for employment, it was difficult to find a contract worker who understood permanency and its model of family finding and engagement.

For participants who have had many losses and are ambivalent about engaging in the reconnection process, staffing changes must be avoided. Six months into the project, one of the collaborating agencies was unable to continue due to the extensive travel that was being required of their workers. A contract was developed with a collaborator that was much closer to the participants. In order to minimize the impact on participants, one worker continued to travel long distances to see a participant with whom she had already established a close working relationship. Because of the change in workers, several participants dropped out of the project. Although unavoidable at the time, these changes highlight the need for services to be offered by an already established agency with staff available where the participants live.

Because of the delays mentioned above and also because of the difficulty in connecting consistently with participants, EYCP workers found that in order to provide ethical services to the young adults, more time was needed than had been allotted for the project. It was necessary to request a six-month extension of the project and to seek additional funding. It is impossible to hurry the permanency process and providers must be flexible with time frames in order to meet the needs of the participants.

14) Hold monthly staff meetings
Monthly meetings were very important; they provided consistency training, progress monitoring, and support for the contractors. Workers were impacted daily by the emotional upheaval of their clients. Some of them (i.e.,

the contractors) worked some distance from the others. To deal with the stresses of the project, workers obtained needed support by meeting with one another and by having consistent regular contact with the project lead. Also, sharing success stories with each other provided motivation as well as instruction in regard to methods that worked well.

15) Track progress
The project lead developed a Progress Report Form (see Appendix V) that was completed quarterly on each case. Data that was gathered from this form included:

- if the participant's goal had changed, and if so, how

- study of how time was spent on the case

- participant's permanency status

- participant's attitude toward permanency and how it was changing

In addition, any significant changes in the participant's life since the date of the last report were noted, especially in regard to items listed on the Intake Form (see Appendix Q) under "barriers" and "current functioning."

Another area tracked was the success of permanency efforts regarding the participant's strengthening a relationship with a caring adult who had the potential to become a lifelong permanent connection and, if so, how this was done. Also reported were efforts to establish connections, such as what potential permanent connections had been identified and whether they had been located. Referrals to support resources and any lessons learned that were important for future practice pertaining to achieving permanency for emancipated foster youth were documented.

16) Adapt services to meet needs of participants
It is important that any provider of services to this population group be flexible and committed to meeting the needs of participants. These young adults have already had many experiences with a system that has ignored their needs and they have experienced many losses. To begin services and then conclude them before a youth attains permanency verges on unethical practice. A worker should never give up on finding permanency for a participant once having begun to provide family finding and engagement and permanency services.

Nine months into the project, the consultants working with the participants became very concerned about their emotional fragility and the toll that the reconnection process was taking on them. The degree of emotional distress being experienced by the participants was much greater than had been expected. This situation might have related to basing services on the high degree of functioning the potential participants were demonstrating in their professional/volunteer advocate arenas. However, it became clear that the participants needed additional emotional support which was not being provided by one-on-one counseling and the Internet support group. Additional funds were sought and a group meeting with a mental health consultant was held in Oakland, California.

Travel distances made it impossible for some participants to attend, but it appears that those most in need did attend. The all-day session served two purposes: (1) to provide the opportunity for participants to give input about program design/adaptation, and (2) to provide the opportunity for participants to support one another around their personal experiences in regard to their own family finding process. Participants agreed on the following recommendations to the project design:

a) Utilize current participants as mentors to new participants if the project continues.

b) Develop digital stories regarding participants' connection stories.

c) Facilitate relationships with the other group members. Hold an initial meeting of all the participants so at the start they can get to know one another, and share who they are and what feelings they are experiencing about beginning the process.

A follow-up survey was administered to gather input from all the participants, especially those that had not attended the meeting so all had a chance to be heard (see Appendix W).

Following the all-day session, the participants were seen more frequently but this did not seem to be a sufficient intervention. Again, more funding was obtained so a follow-up retreat could be held. The retreat was very successful in helping the group members stabilize, make plans on maintaining contact with each other, and in challenging one individual to take some risks in looking for her family. Indeed, that individual has now been connected to six very stable family members; she attributes her willingness to take that risk from seeing what the other participants were doing, based on their reports at the retreat.

The stories of the participants as they engaged in their searches are testimony regarding the outcomes of the project. (All names are fictitious.)

Jackie's Story

In describing her participation in EYCP, Jackie talked about how difficult it was for her to participate in the process, believing at the beginning that she didn't need help and, even if she did, others needed it more.

Her own foster care experience included depression, sadness, and the lack of a permanent connection. Jackie first entered foster care when she was twelve years old after living on the street for two hard years. Now in her early thirties, Jackie said that foster care did not give her experience with successful relationships and no experience in developing the needed skills to carry on the small talk that leads to and is part of ongoing relationships. She said that as foster youth are unable to find a family, they begin to believe that they are too "screwed up" to be part of a family. Often they feel completely rejected by parents and family. The skills that are taught in independent living, Jackie felt, may all be in vain – for instance, foster youth don't know how to balance a checkbook or open a bank account – and even when they are taught, it doesn't "take" because foster youth have no money so balancing a checkbook is irrelevant.

Jackie's plan was to locate her father's brother. Jackie wrote to her uncle, and after a considerable period, she finally received a phone call from an aunt and eventually went with her child to visit her uncle and aunt. Jackie learned their perspectives on how she had been left in foster care. Jackie emphasized several times that she became even more firmly convinced that it was critical to support youth through this family finding process when they were still in the system, because it was extremely difficult to come up against the emotions of grief and loss when out on one's own and responsible for supporting oneself and maybe a family. Another participant said, "When you are out on your own, you can't take a month off to process these feelings, but when you are in the system, you have support to help you."

Diane's Story

Diane emphasized that the two group meetings held for the EYCP participants impacted her enormously. By hearing from other former foster youth who work successfully in the foster care field advocating for current foster youth, she gained insight into herself.

Diane thought that the other participants in EYCP were grounded, established, and secure. She thought they had successfully entered adulthood with ease and confidence having made sense of their traumatic childhoods. While attending the meetings she learned that even the most visibly successful among them have great insecurities and uncertainty. Many of them share the same struggles as Diane: feeling alone, sometimes hopeless, disconnected, and afraid. This knowledge, Diane explained, has given her more hope and faith in herself.

Diane hopes that at the end of the Emancipated Youth Connections Project, we will all have a better understanding of what it is like for foster youth who age out of the system with no responsible, caring, permanent connection. She stated that "if you guys get that, then there is more hope for kids now in the system because you will realize how important it is to find that connection before they are out on their own."

Joe's Story

Joe is a twenty-three year old male who has been in care since the age of five. From the age of fourteen to sixteen he lived on the street with the exception of five psychiatric admissions. From age sixteen to seventeen he lived in a residential facility that provided gay and lesbian adolescent services, following which he was in juvenile hall for drug trafficking. When Joe began EYCP he was sporadically seeing a psychiatrist who was prescribing medication for anxiety and a psychologist who was prescribing medication for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). He had been in treatment at the Betty Ford Clinic for chemical dependency, which was paid for by a surrogate father who was now on his deathbed. During these experiences Joe had been beaten, strangled, raped, shot, and held at knifepoint.

Joe believed himself to be Native American. His goals at intake were to locate his tribe and to reconnect with his sisters whom he had not seen for over six years. During the course of receiving EYCP services, Joe was not able to maintain sobriety for any significant length of time and as a result of relapse, he became suicidal numerous times.

Because Joe had limited family information and only one small photo of his mother, the search began by obtaining the county file. From file information it was then possible to reconnect with Joe's father and to locate an address for his maternal grandmother. With this information and some additional information learned from Joe's father, it was possible to do an Internet search. On Mother's Day Joe decided on his own to go to the address that had been found for his maternal grandmother. When Joe was standing outside the house, a

man walked up. Joe asked if he knew his grandmother. Joe was lucky – as is so often seen in the search process, although the man was not related to his grandmother, the man knew her and provided Joe with her phone number. Joe called her and she was very happy to hear from him and asked him to come over to her house. Because it was Mother's Day there were a lot of relatives at the house and Joe got to reconnect with many of them and meet new cousins for the first time.

From information obtained from these relatives, it was possible to locate Joe's sister and his three nieces. He spent the Fourth of July with them at Disneyland and later expressed his pleasure at being called "uncle" for the first time in his life. Joe now lives with his sister and is more motivated to engage in his substance abuse and mental health treatment.

Other Stories

One participant had the goal of locating someone on her paternal side of the family, hopefully her father. Her early home environment was filled with alcohol abuse and violence and she entered foster care for the first time when she was just three years old. She was in and out of foster care throughout her childhood; however, for this participant foster care was not the "safe haven" it is supposed to be, as she was abused while living in one of her foster homes. Her mother had told her that her father was deceased but because her mother often lied to her, the participant hoped that he was alive. A US Search was run utilizing the name she provided. Phone calls were made to the contacts listed but none appeared to be her father. Letters were written to individuals who had no phone numbers listed. Since these strategies were unsuccessful, a search for a death certificate was done and it revealed that her mother had not lied. Another US Search was done to try to locate the person listed as the informant on the death certificate and follow up phone calls and letters were made to all of those numbers and addresses. Again, these efforts were not successful. Finally a call was made to the cemetery identified on the death certificate as the place of burial. The worker there had contact information

for the informant on the certificate. Although she would not provide the worker with that information, she was willing to call the individual and tell him that a person was searching for him. Three days later the informant, the participant's brother, called and was very anxious to meet his sister. He always knew that he had a sister and was very excited about finding her; however, the participant did not know she had a brother and this was astonishing news. Over the months they have formed a relationship and she describes him as a "very sweet man." Although initially her brother was eager to be a "big brother," it was necessary for the participant to go slowly. Once a connection is made, it is only the beginning of another journey for the participant.

Another participant who is working three jobs, going to graduate school on a part-time basis, and raising two children had the goal of reconnecting to her oldest biological twin brothers. The participant's father was killed in a drug deal when she was four. She was placed in care due to her mother's drug and physical abuse. She was in twenty-five placements before emancipating with her daughter, after which they lived in an abandoned house. The participant had some contact with her mother over the years and expressed the dream of reunifying all of her brothers while her mother was still alive. She also wished to locate a previous CASA volunteer and her best friend from school. After several months, a number of Internet searches, and countless phone calls and letters, all of these individuals were located. At the time the case was closed, plans were in place for a summer reunion outside of California with the participant and her brothers. The CASA and the participant were also committed to meeting face-to-face during the summer. A lesson learned is that the process of reconnecting to lost connections may also help to strengthen existing connections, in this case specifically, the participant's mother. The participant began to assess her relationship with her mother who has been sober for several years and has been able to identify the support that she is currently providing to her.

Definition of Permanency and Permanent/Lifelong Connection

Definition of Permanency

Permanency is both a process and a result that includes involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in finding a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides:

- A safe, stable, and secure parenting relationship

- Love

- Unconditional commitment

- Lifelong support in the context of reunification, a legal adoption, or guardianship, where possible, and in which the youth has the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons, including brothers and sisters

A broad array of individualized permanency options exist; reunification and adoption are an important two among many that may be appropriate.

Definition of a Permanent/Lifelong Connection

An adult who consistently states and demonstrates that she or he has entered an unconditional, lifelong parent-like relationship with the youth. The youth agrees that the adult will play this role in his or her life.

Organizational Accomplishments of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) since its establishment in January 2003

- Established a Youth Permanency Task Force which addresses issues of youth permanency such as partnerships necessary to accomplish the work, and provides an opportunity to share progress being made around the state

- Hosted four National Convenings on youth permanency

- Developed several documents related to youth permanency:

  ◦ In 2004, published ***Model Programs for Youth Permanency*** and ***Youth Perspectives on Permanency*** (collaboration with the California Youth Connection)

  ◦ Collaborated with Casey Family Services, the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, together with Casey Family Programs and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Inc. to publish ***A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood*** (2005)

  ◦ Collaborated with National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work to publish ***Six Steps to Find a Family: A Practice Guide to Family Search and Engagement*** (2007)

  ◦ Published ***Organizational Development Guide for Youth Permanency*** (2007)

- In cooperation with the Bay Area Child Welfare Training Academy, sponsored a digital story workshop for ten former or current foster youth to produce their own permanency stories on a short video. The ten videos are available as a package called ***Telling It Like It Is*** which is available for training purposes

- Has provided technical assistance to fourteen California counties to help them improve their permanency outcomes for foster youth

- Commissioned Bob Lewis to develop a curriculum specifically for California child welfare workers: ***Talking with Teens and Preparing Everyone for Permanent Family Connections***

- Established three statewide work groups to develop recommendations regarding partnerships between public child welfare and the courts, group homes, and adoption and foster family agencies in order to work effectively toward permanency outcomes for foster youth. Findings were presented in ***Recommendations for Effective Partnerships on Youth Permanency*** (2006).

- Made multiple presentations at local, statewide, and national conferences to promote youth permanency practice.

- Provided coaching and information to organizations across the country interested in adopting part or all of the CPYP approach.

As a result of CPYP's work, its founding director, Pat Reynolds-Harris, received an Adoption Excellence award in 2004 and CPYP was honored at the National Foster Care Month Capitol Kick-off event at the California State Capitol in May 2005.

Proposed EYCP Activities
from the proposal to the Zellerbach Family Foundation

1) Organize a team of professionals, including staff from CPYP, Family Builders by Adoption, and EMQ, and a foster care aluminus advisor to plan the project and carry out implementation.

2) Conduct outreach to older youth that have been involved in our work and to youth to be served.

3) Engage each youth, establish an individualized process, plan to meet the youth's permanency needs, and access the case files from the county where youth was in care. Provide a supportive professional environment to explore issues such as fears, coping with loss and personal defensive styles, ramifications of decisions, and other "emotional issues" regarding permanency.

4) Conduct appropriate searches through utilization of a web search tool such as US Search, if necessary, to locate potential connections such as relatives, past foster parents, teachers, coaches, fictive kin, past neighbors, etc., and provide appropriate support to youth and connections throughout the process, in part by utilizing team meetings which include the youth, family, and other potential connections and support groups.

5) Engage and assess potential connections utilizing out-of-state licensed agencies as necessary.

6) Prepare and support the connection to help sustain the established relationship.

7) Facilitate the legal process for adoption and establish commitment ceremonies when adoption is not the plan.

Family Partnership Institute

251 Llewellyn Ave., Campbell, CA 95008

Bradley D. Norman, LCSW, Director
(408) 364-4083
bnorman@emq.org

1.3a Engagement and Team Preparation
Using the EMQ Connectedness Model

Many mental health professionals were trained to use a genogram, which is a derivative of a medical tool that was used to trace genetically transmitted disorders. The genogram, although widely used by physicians, social workers, and other therapists, has really not evolved to meet the more sophisticated understanding of the connectedness that matters just as much as biological or genetic lineage.

The EMQ Connectedness Model is designed to be used collaboratively with a child and family to explore areas of relation that might not otherwise be discovered. Humans and families are extraordinarily complex and multidimensional beings. As such, the Connectedness Model and its diagramming process are designed to capture some part of this in a manner that fosters engagement, empowerment, genuine inquiry, and the desire to truly understand the internal life of our children and families. The diagram becomes a living representation, which is owned by the child and family who co-participate in its creation. The very act of creating the Connectedness Diagram can yield results that are surprising—not only to the facilitator, but to the youth and family, as well. A successful connectedness diagramming process can go far in showing how genuinely the facilitator wants to understand who and what matters most to the youth and family. It is also a way to communicate cultural sensitivity to families who may define "family" beyond a nuclear family unit.

"To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world."

Invariable questions that the connectedness diagram raises include:

- Who loves whom?
- Who teaches whom?
- What do they teach?
- What do they learn?
- Who matters most to a child or family?
- Who is missing?
- Who is being missed?
- To whom is the youth or family spiritually connected?
- From whom do they receive psychological support or nourishment?
- Who are their cultural connections?

What matters most to humans are our human connections. Bereft of these connections, we wither and fail to grow. With a rich network of interpersonal connectedness, a human is encouraged, supported, motivated, made capable of living life more fully, and of sharing both joy and pain. In many ways, human interconnectedness is at the core of the EMQ Matrix model. As the saying goes, "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world." This is potentially true of any person who shows up on the connectedness diagram.

 EMQ *Children & Family Services*®

The Connectedness Diagram

The Connectedness Diagram is quite simple but can be quite nuanced and subtle (see sample diagram below). It begins with a genogram in which a child's biological relationship is diagrammed in the traditional way using horizontal tiers for the child's generation (excluding peers), parents' generation, and grandparents' (and older) generation. This is done in the color

Blue is the blood that runs in the veins.

blue, a mnemonic for <u>the blue of the blood that runs in the veins</u>. The blue portion of the Connectedness Diagram is very similar to the traditional genogram in that it represents the biological connections and the genetic endowment the child has inherited. Unlike the genogram, the Connectedness Diagram pays very close attention to whom the person loves

and by whom the person feels loved. These connections are represented in red, a mnemonic for <u>the heart that bleeds</u>. There may be some concordance between the biological relatives and those to whom the child is connected by love, but there may be others outside of the family (e.g., friends, teachers, coaches, foster parents) to whom the child feels a deep heart connection. There may be unrelated surrogate grandparents who provide much of the love that a child must have in order to flourish. Oftentimes, the child has a considerable amount of love for siblings, which can be both a source of support and strength and a place to discharge natural filial altruism. Facilitators may need to be reminded that many children are as much in need of someone to care for as they are in need of being cared for themselves.

Red is the heart that bleeds.

In addition, children have an inherent need to learn and even perhaps to teach. This is
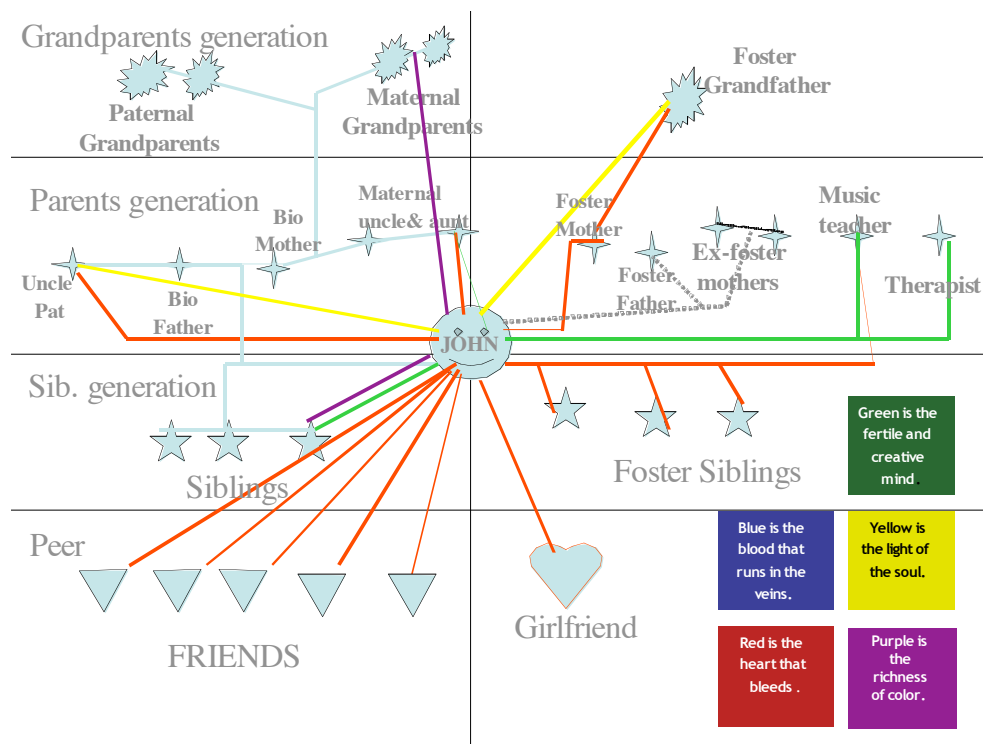
Green is the fertile and creative mind.

symbolized in the mnemonic green, representing <u>the fertile and creative mind</u>. For example, the child may have a relationship with a schoolteacher, maybe a music teacher or a coach, to whom she also feels a heart connection. In this case, there is no biological or legal relationship with this adult in the child's life but, nonetheless, it is a relationship that could potentially be mobilized to support the child and family during a time of crisis. These connections, involving both those from whom the child learns and those the child teaches, are equally important. Often an older sibling who appears quite incapable of taking care of herself will take very good care of a younger sibling and teach her things that she herself needs to put into practice. For example, you may find a sibling who teaches her younger siblings not to abuse drugs; this impulse could be mobilized to understand why the older sibling herself does not practice what she preaches. Furthermore, it is important to understand the content of what is learned and what is being taught. If a child draws a green line to a history teacher, what it is about history that has engaged the child to this degree, and is there something that might be mobilized as a strength, a support, or an activity that could be used as part of the individualized child and family plan?

As well, there is the spiritual dimension that is diagrammed in the mnemonic yellow, representing <u>the light of the soul</u>. By nature, humans have a spiritual dimension, even if they do not care to acknowledge it. Many children and families, however, are very open in discussing their spiritual relationships

Yellow is the light of the soul.

with others. In many cultures, spirituality is a central aspect of an individual's every day. This dimension is particularly important in that it can often provide a healing power that is greater than what any psychological or psychiatric intervention could ever provide. This is particularly true when working with addictions and other unhealthy compulsions, but it can also be true in healing and building constructive relationships. The spiritual dimensions of a person's life should be explored gently and thoroughly. The Connectedness Diagram gives a way to do this neutrally, while never imposing a spiritual perspective on anyone.

Finally, there are the connections that bring to people an understanding and appreciation of

Purple is the richness of culture.

their cultural heritage. Culture, here, is used in its broadest sense to go beyond race and ethnicity to encompass the spectrum of history, traditions, values, and beliefs that pertain to this individual in the context of his or her family and environment. The connections may be unilateral or bilateral with the exchange of information occurring in either or both directions between the identified youth and the other.

At the end of the connectedness process what the family, facilitator, and transition team end up with is a multicolored diagram called the Connectedness Diagram. It shows those connections of the heart, mind, body, soul, and culture that are unique and important to the individual child and family. In our experience at EMQ, this methodology yields a robust discovery process while at the same time building engagement and true understanding. EMQ practitioners use it routinely.

Form JV 570 Petition for Disclosure of Juvenile Court Records

JV-570

ATTORNEY OR PARTY WITHOUT ATTORNEY (Name, State Bar number, and address):	FOR COURT USE ONLY

TELEPHONE NO.:   FAX NO. (Optional):
E-MAIL ADDRESS (Optional):
ATTORNEY FOR (Name):

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF
     STREET ADDRESS:
     MAILING ADDRESS:
     CITY AND ZIP CODE:
     BRANCH NAME:

CHILD'S NAME: HEARING DATE AND TIME:

PETITION FOR DISCLOSURE OF JUVENILE COURT RECORDS Welfare and Institutions Code, § 827	CASE NUMBER:

1. Petitioner's name and address (if representing another person, organization, or agency, provide names and addresses):

2. Petitioner's relationship to child (specify):

3. Petitioner on information and belief alleges the following:
   a. There are juvenile court records concerning the above-named child.
   b. ☐ The child has been found to be within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court under
      (1) ☐ Welfare and Institutions Code section 300
      (2) ☐ Welfare and Institutions Code section 601
      (3) ☐ Welfare and Institutions Code section 602
      (4) ☐ Unknown
   c. ☐ The child is currently a ☐ dependent ☐ ward of the juvenile court.   ☐ Unknown
   d. ☐ The case was closed on (date):   ☐ Unknown

4. Petitioner requests access to the following juvenile court records as defined by California Rules of Court, rule 5.552 (describe in detail; attach additional pages if necessary):

   ☐ Continued on Attachment 4.

5. The reasons for this request are (describe in detail the relevance of, and the necessity for, the requested records; attach additional pages if necessary):
   a. ☐ Civil court case pending (no.:   )
   b. ☐ Criminal court case pending (no.:   )
   c. ☐ Relevant case nos. (if known):
   d. ☐ Juvenile court case no.:   ☐ Police report no.:
   e. ☐ Other (specify):

   ☐ Continued on Attachment 5.

(Continued on reverse)   Page 1 of 2

Form Adopted for Mandatory Use Judicial Council of California JV-570 [Rev. January 1, 2007]	**PETITION FOR DISCLOSURE OF JUVENILE COURT RECORDS** Welfare and Institutions Code, § 827	Welfare and Institutions Code, §§ 827, 828; Cal. Rules of Court, rules 5.504, 5.552 www.courtinfo.ca.gov

American LegalNet, Inc.
www.FormsWorkflow.com

CHILD'S NAME:	CASE NUMBER:

NOTICE MUST BE PROVIDED TO ALL KNOWN PARTIES IN THE MINOR'S CASE INCLUDING THE MINOR.

6. ☐ A copy of this petition has been placed in a sealed envelope with postage paid and the envelope has been deposited in the United States mail to the following:

    a. ☐ County counsel *(address)*:
        Date mailed:
    b. ☐ District attorney *(address)*:
        Date mailed:
    c. ☐ Child *(address)*:
        Date mailed:
    d. ☐ Attorney of record for child who is a current dependent or ward *(name and address)*:

        Date mailed:
    e. ☐ Child's parent or guardian, if child is under 18 years of age or if a dependency petition was ever filed regarding the child *(name and address)*:

        Date mailed:
    f. ☐ Probation department *(address)*:

        Date mailed:
    g. ☐ Child *welfare services* program *(address)*:

        Date mailed:

7. ☐ Petitioner was unable to provide notice of this petition and hearing to the following because the identity of the party or the address or both were unknown to petitioner, and the clerk should serve a copy of the petition and notice of hearing by first-class mail:

    a. ☐ Child.
    b. ☐ Child's attorney of record.
    c. ☐ Parent or guardian.

8. ☐ The child has consented to the requested disclosure and the child's written consent or release is attached.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing and all attachments are true and correct.

Date:

▶

_____
(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)

_____
(SIGNATURE OF PETITIONER)

9. Address and telephone number:

10. ☐ Number of pages attached: _____

ORDER

1. ☐ PETITION GRANTED ☐ PETITION DENIED
2. ☐ ADDITIONAL ORDERS:

3. ☐ Set Hearing on Petition. Clerk to notice under California Rules of Court, rule 5.552.

Date:

_____
JUDICIAL OFFICER

JV-570 [Rev. January 1, 2007]

PETITION FOR DISCLOSURE OF JUVENILE COURT RECORDS
Welfare and Institutions Code, § 827

Page 2 of 2

Authorization to Release Records

I authorize the release of records, documents, or other information concerning

_____ to_____ .

This release includes the following (please initial):

_____ 	Medical, psychological, or psychiatric records (including, but not limited to
records of diagnoses and treatment): _____

_____ 	School records: _____

_____ 	Financial records: _____

_____ 	All records in the possession of any county Department of Human Services/Social Services

_____ 	All records in the possession of any county Juvenile Probation Department

_____ 	All records in the possession of the Social Security Administration (SSA)

_____ 	Other: _____

A copy of this Authorization shall be as valid as the original. This Authorization is effective immediately and expires one year from the date below.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Form Letter to Judges

C.P.Y.P.
California Permanency for Youth Project

663 13th Street, Suite 300
Oakland, CA 94612
tel: 510.268.0038
fax: 510.268.8496
www.cpyp.org

March 13, 2006

Honorable Michael Nash, Presiding Judge, Juvenile Court
201 Centre Plaza Drive
Monterey Park, CA 91754

Dear Judge Nash:

The California Permanency for Youth Project is working on a pilot program funded through the Stuart and Zellerbach Family Foundations to assist young adults who have emancipated from the child welfare system without any permanent connection in locating people that have been in their lives in the past. Los Angeles County is one of fourteen counties in the state which is participating with us on the project.

We are working with two young adults who were in your county at the time of removal from their home. To assist us in the search process, we are seeking an opportunity to review their records. Diane Wagner has been assisting us in learning the process and providing us with the proper form. Please find the attached Petitions for Disclosure of Juvenile Court Records for two individuals, <person 1> and <person 2>.

For questions regarding <person 1>, you can contact _____

For questions regarding <person 2>, you can contact_____

Thank you for assistance in this regard.

Sincerely,

Cheryl J. Jacobson
California Permanency for Youth Project
303-123-4567 (cell)

C.P.Y.P.
California Permanency for Youth Project

663 13th Street, Suite 300
Oakland, CA 94612
tel: 510.268.0038
fax: 510.268.8496
www.cpyp.org

May 10, 2006

Dear_____ :

I am helping a young person that I think may be a relative of yours. We have a program to assist youth who have emancipated from the child welfare system find lost family members. _____ is looking for her paternal grandparents. We think that perhaps you were married to her father, _____, and that you might have information about his parents or perhaps even other relatives of his. _____ is doing well but would like to know more about her people.

I am enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope and if you have information, I would like to have you either send it to me or send me your current phone number so we can call you. _____ would also be interested in talking with you if you are willing to speak with her.

Any information would be very helpful in our search.

Thank You,

Cheryl J. Jacobson

Initial Engagement Interview Form

1. How many relatives does this child have on the planet? _____

2. Can you tell us anything about those relatives?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Which relative does the child most look like? _____

4. In what way does the child look like this relative? _____

5. What is the nationality of the child's relatives? _____

6. How many aunts and uncles does the child have? _____

7. How many cousins does the child have? _____

8. What is the faith-based tradition of the family? _____

9. What are the occupations of the child's family members? _____

   _____

   _____

10. What type of talents and or gifts do the child's family members have?

    _____

    _____

11. What is the culture of the child's family? _____

12. Are there any health problems that run in the child's family?

    _____

    _____

13. Who in the child's family has done the best with their children?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

14. Please tell us a story about the child's family that you are most proud of.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

15. Who is the best holder of information on your family? _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

16. Can I get the names of three additional family members to call? _____

    _____

    _____

Possible Welcome and Outline of Services
(not used but recommended)

WELCOME TO THE
EMANCIPATED YOUTH CONNECTIONS PROJECT

You will be provided a connections contract worker who will assist you in your connections efforts.

1) Your worker will establish a regular weekly appointment time to meet with you at a mutually convenient location.

2) You will meet with other participants at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

3) Your worker will assist you in establishing your connection goals based on interviews regarding your family and your previous relationships.

4) A system of friends and professionals will be established to support you during your connection efforts.

5) Depending on your goals, your worker will conduct searches and make contact with individuals who are found. You will be central to the process and your input will be obtained in your weekly meetings.

6) You will be provided information regarding support services provided by the project and in the community. The project will provide an Internet Listserv that is password secure to link you to other participants to share ideas and information. Besides meeting weekly with your worker, you may be referred to other services based on your interest and need, such as assistance with employment, training, housing, and other counseling or support.

7) Your connections worker will meet with your found connections and be a liaison at the time of your first meeting. He or she will continue to be available to assist in supporting that new or reestablished relationship.

8) A support group will be available for the connections who are found so they can meet with others who are also being newly reconnected to loved ones in order for them to learn from one another and support one another.

9) A "Transitioning Plan" will be developed by your worker to assure that help is in place if necessary to maintain the new or reestablished relationships.

APPENDIX K

Lessons Learned

Adolescent Connections, Project UPLIFT

Adolescent Connections, Project UPLIFT Evaluation Report
Adolescent Connections Supervisor
Cheryl Jacobson/Recruitment and Retention Specialist

LESSONS LEARNED

Diligent Search

- Case files lacked clear and succinct information about family connections and others involved in a child's life

  - Information must be collected at case opening and recorded in a permanent and prominent place in the file

  - Information must be regularly updated

- Youth may know of family or others from their past but lack full names and addresses

  - Once a family member is contacted he or she provides information about other family members resulting in the establishment of multiple connections for youth

  - The longer youth remain in care, the more difficult it becomes to locate family members due to moves and information being lost to memory.

- Paternity information and information regarding paternal relatives is much less available than maternal information

- More efforts must be directed toward completion of diligent searches

Contractors

- Must be skilled and experienced

- Because of the contractor's independence from the county department, parents are often able to move beyond their anger at the system to do what is best for their child

- One contractor reported he received more thanks from youth and parents on this six-month project than he had received in twenty-two years of casework practice

Clear/Written Principles

- Principles must be clearly outlined to guide day-to-day decisions

- Contractors must think differently than caseworkers: without clear values and principles, it is too easy to fall into past casework practices

Challenge Previously Held Beliefs

- No child is too hard to be placed for adoption

- It is not right for any professional to make that decision on behalf of a youth

  - This project accepted any youth who was in the custody of the county department and for whom termination of parental rights could be obtained if an adoption connection was established

  - This project included youth with difficult issues and successfully found placements for them

Contractor Characteristics

- Tenacity

- The belief that people change

- The belief that relationships are important

- The ability to be open and forthright about issues

- The ability to communicate clearly

- The ability to accept people's ambivalence and help them move through it

- Willingness to challenge their own beliefs

  - 75 percent of the problem is adult attitudes regarding older youth and permanency

- Ability to see youth for their positive qualities

  ◦ For example, workers planned around the youth's needs but did not focus on a diagnosis such as seeing a youth as "a reactive attachment disorder" which may have led to believing that the youth was not able to be placed

  ◦ This project did not direct contract workers to read files extensively in order to collect data about diagnosis, so conclusions can not be made about caseload difficulties

Time Well Spent…More Placements Established

- Successful contractors spent more time with the youth and their connections

  ◦ Worker 2 and Worker 4 both structured their time in this way and found the most connections

  ◦ Worker 2 had a total of six adolescents with success levels at ten or above with a mean time of 12.7 hours

  ◦ Worker 4, whose contract was for twice the amount of time and had two counties, had six adolescents with success levels at ten or above with a mean time of 41.1 hours

- Less successful contractors spent more time on reading case files

- More intense time spent in contact with the youth and connections will produce more positive and more permanent connections.

Agency Barriers

Time needs to be spent educating the county department about the philosophy and goals of the Adolescent Connections Project

- Best if the contractor can attend staff meetings

- Due to budget limitations, this was done one-on-one with caseworkers and supervisors

- Two contractors had previously been employed in the counties they were assigned and their work was readily respected by the caseworkers and supervisors—barriers due to differing philosophies were more readily overcome

- Once caseworkers saw results, some changed their case practices to embrace these ideas

Tools

- Use of Internet tools with historical addresses and phone numbers of individuals is critical

- Use of phone cards to support contact between the new connections and the youth

- Travel funds to facilitate face-to-face contact between the youth and relative/others

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effective during times of budget cuts

Cost savings analysis data on following page

Adolescent Connections Supervisor
Cheryl Jacobson/Recruitment and Retention Specialist
COST EFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAM

Inter-jurisdictional Connections

Types of Most Permanent Connections Established

Adoption in Progress	Intent to Adopt Signed Contract	Reunification with Family	Intent to Adopt No Contract
2	7	2	3

*Total 14 with average age of 13 years

Level of Care of Youth at Pilot Intake/Monthly Average Cost of Care

Residential Treatment Center (RTC)	Child Placement Agency Foster Home or Group Home	County Foster Home
4 youth	4 youth	6 youth
$3,900	$1,423	$1,022

*Monthly average cost of three levels of care for any child in the system=$2,115

Projected Savings

Number of Youth	Average Monthly Cost of Care	Years of Placement Costs Saved	Average Monthly Adoption Subsidy Costs	Total Savings
4 already placed 2 require adoption subsidy	$2,115	5	$425	$507,600 – $51,000 $ 456,000
All 14 youth *	$2,115	5	$425	$1,776,600 – $357,000 $1,419,600

*Savings for all 14 youth assumes that individuals stating a willingness to adopt will do so and a placement will be made

Multiplying the average yearly cost of care by the number of youth and subtracting the yearly cost of average adoption subsidies determined total savings.

Declaration of Intent to Maintain Contact

(I/We) _____have received notice

that _____is available for regular contact.
   Youth's name and DOB

(I/We) do declare our intent and commitment to maintain contact

with _____.
   Youth's name

This is how (and how often) (I/We) intend to have contact:

_____

_____

_____

Name, mailing address and phone number:

_____

_____

(I/We) do understand that it is very important to have regular contact with said youth. Regular contact means no less contact than every other week and during **holidays** and **birthdays**.

(I/We) also understand that this document is not a legal document.

Date and Signature _____

(copy to family, youth, and caseworker)
Developed by Cheryl J. Jacobson, MSW

APPENDIX M

Guide for Face-to-Face Support Group

Support Group (Face-to-Face) for Participants in the Emancipated Youth Connections Project

WHO

The support group will consist of young men and women who have participated in the Emancipated Youth Connections Project. They all have either emancipated or aged out of the foster care system. It is a group whose members are young adults living independently and, through EYCP, have sought a permanent connection. At this time it appears that about eight participants will be from the Bay Area and they will be invited to join this group.

The facilitator of the group will be a social worker from Family Builders by Adoption who is working on EYCP. The worker will provide pertinent topics of discussion related to the process of finding, maintaining, and strengthening a permanent connection as well as strengthening other relationships in the young adult's life. The social worker will also provide resources available that pertain to the issues discussed.

WHAT

It is the purpose of this support group to provide a supportive, sympathetic, positive, and constructive atmosphere where members feel safe and develop trust within the group. It is the goal that members will experience the group as a place where they will feel understood and accepted. Attention will be focused on what members are currently experiencing in their lives regarding a permanent connection and the resulting effects of such connections. Members will discuss other topics related to living independently and navigating their path through daily life.

GOALS

1) Support and encourage one another
2) Offer feedback to each other by sharing personal experiences
3) Build relationships and cohesiveness within the group
4) Share experiences and educate one another by suggesting actions that have been helpful in similar circumstances
5) Allow for constructive spontaneity of the group experience
6) Instillation of hope for the future
7) Catharsis and universality
8) Acceptance and respect from group members

Keeping these goals in mind, the ultimate objective is that the group dynamic of shared experiences, respect and support for one another, hope for the future, etc. will increase each member's feelings of self-worth and self-respect. This individual growth will result in deepening the permanent relationship. Another important objective of this experience is the participant's ability to successfully function in his or her daily life and in all other relationships will be enhanced.

Some suggested TOPICS* for discussion within the group:

1) Experiencing your permanent connection, problems and fears
2) Life experiences: similarities and differences
3) Emotional support provided by a permanent connection
4) What am I giving to my permanent connection?
5) What am I learning through this experience?
6) Educational and career choices
7) Finding and maintaining housing
8) Health and nutrition
9) My current work in the field of foster care

*Other topics for discussion will be identified by group members once the group is under way.

RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE SUPPORT GROUP

1) Participation in the EYCP Support Group constitutes ongoing acceptance of these rules.
2) Membership in the EYCP Support Group is open only to those who have or are participating in the project.
3) Members agree to keep all discussions private and confidential among participants as to do otherwise discourages others' willingness to share.
4) It may take courage for members to share personal feelings. Members agree to remain sensitive and respectful to each other.
5) There will be no attacking other group members because of their opinions or views. Group members should be made to feel comfortable to join in group discussion and share feelings. Each member is encouraged to share his or her point of view, but no one is forced to do so at each meeting.

Guide for Internet Support Group

1. *Send out an e-mail welcoming everyone to the Internet Group*

Example:

Welcome aboard everyone!! We are so excited to begin this Internet group for all of the participants in the Emancipated Youth Connections Project. Thank you for agreeing to be part of this new and unique group.

We social workers are already on board and waiting for you to join us. We look forward to your participation and your suggestions on how to optimize the use of this group. Each one of you has something unique to add to this group and to this project. We anticipate good things happening here. Thank you.

2. *Send out an e-mail explaining the details of the group*

Example:

—Original Message—
From groupname@yahoogroups.com
To: groupname@yahoogroups.com
Subject: EYCP Group

WHO?

This group will consist of young men and women who have and are participating in the Emancipated Youth Connections Project. They all have either emancipated or aged out of the foster care system. It is a group whose members are young adults living independently and, through EYCP, have sought a permanent connection. The facilitator will be a social worker from Family Builders by Adoption who is working on this project. The worker will provide pertinent topics of discussion related to the process of finding, maintaining, and strengthening a permanent connection as well as strengthening other relationships in the young adult's life. The social worker will also provide resources available that pertain to the issues discussed.

WHAT?

It is the purpose of this support group to provide a supportive, sympathetic, positive, and constructive atmosphere where members feel safe and develop trust within the group. It is the goal that members will experience the group as a place where they will feel understood and accepted. Attention will be focused on what members are currently experiencing in their lives regarding a permanent connection and the resulting effects of such connections. Members will discuss other topics related to living independently and navigating their path through daily life.

GOALS?

1) Support and encourage one another

2) Offer feedback to each other by sharing personal experiences

3) Build relationships and cohesiveness within the group

4) Share experiences and educate one another by suggesting actions that have been helpful in similar circumstances

5) Allow for constructive spontaneity of the group experience

6) Instillation of hope for the future

7) Catharsis and universality

8) Acceptance and respect from group members

Keeping these goals in mind, the ultimate objective is that the group dynamic of shared experiences, respect and support for one another, hope for the future, etc. will increase each member's feelings of self-worth and self-respect. This individual growth will result in deepening the permanent relationship. Another important objective of this experience is that the participant's ability to successfully function in her or his daily life and in all other relationships will be enhanced.

Emancipated Youth Connections Project Closure Report Form

Today's Date: _____ Name of Contract Worker _____

Participant's Name: _____

Dates service began and ended:_____

Participant's Goal: Did the participant's goal change during the process? If so, why?
What was initial goal?

Total Time Spent on Case:

Time researching/reading file (including contact w/county): ____:____ hrs : mins

Time speaking with participant (either by phone or in person): ____:____ hrs : mins

Time searching for connections (by Internet, phone, etc.)
   not including mining the county files: ____:____ hrs : mins

Time speaking with connections (either by phone or in person): ____:____ hrs : mins

Travel time: ____:____ hrs : mins

Other (please explain): _____ ____:____ hrs : mins

Level on Permanency Scale: (Put **I** for "initial" and **E** for "ending" levels)

____ 1. Participant has no existing or potential lifelong connections

____ 2. Participant has a potential lifelong connection but no commitment has been made

____ 3. Participant has a lifelong connection to a caring adult

____ 4. A change in legal status: adoption, guardianship, reunification, is in process

____ 5. Adoption, guardianship, reunification has occurred

General Information

Please describe any significant changes in this participant's life since the date of the beginning of services (i.e., change in any of the areas on the Intake Form listed under barriers and current functioning). Did services address any of these areas? If so, how, and how did the service impact the barrier or functioning of the participant?

Permanency Efforts

Youth's attitude about permanency: How did the youth's attitude toward permanency change during the process? Put **I** for "initial" by attitude at time service began and **E** for "ending" at time services ended (choose one).

_____ Wants a permanent connection

_____ Is ambivalent

_____ Does not want a permanent connection

_____ Do not yet know the participant's attitude about forming a permanent connection

Please elaborate on change in attitude.

Success of Permanency Efforts: Has this participant strengthened a relationship with a caring adult who has the potential to become a lifelong permanent connection? If yes, please describe. Please clarify the extent to which this connection was located through this project. (I.e., was this a new connection unknown to the participant? Or did you help the participant reconnect to someone who had dropped out of his or her life?)

Seeking Connections: How were potential permanency connections sought and found? Who did this? Were there any unusual, special, or unique methods employed? Were there any especially difficult or surprising barriers? Were there barriers in obtaining past case file information of social services from the previous counties with which the participant was involved? Please indicate how many searches were completed and what type.

Decision Making: What potential permanency connections were identified? Were they located? Please list those found and contacted and indicate if a connection was formed. Please indicate how frequently the participant is talking with the connection, both by phone and in person. What decisions did the participant make regarding potential connections? How did service impact these decisions?

Support Resources: Has any person, external agency, or community resource helped with the permanency effort? What did they contribute?

Other Comments: Please describe anything else that has either helped or hindered your efforts to achieve permanency for this participant.

Successful Permanency Outcomes

Please describe any financial, medical, educational, therapeutic, social, or other resources that have been or are important for the support of this relationship. What referrals were made? What services were needed but could not be located?

What have you learned in this case that you wish to contribute toward future practice regarding achieving permanency for emancipated foster youth? Any new "lessons learned" not previously reported?

Please attach a short summary story regarding this participant.

Emancipated Youth Connections Project Referral Form

Name of person making referral (unless self-referred): _____

Relationship to person being referred: _____

ELIGIBILITY: Please refer youth/young adults who want to learn more about permanency connections and the service they may receive from the project, and who also fit both criteria below. (Both areas must be checked YES)

The youth/young adult has been emancipated from the foster care system.

Yes _____   No _____   Date of emancipation if known _____

The youth/young adult is actively involved in endorsing permanency as the right of all foster youth and has been or is involved with CPYP through the Task Force or Advisory Committee, production of digital stories, advancing legislation, being a trainer in the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project, or in some related activity.

Yes _____   No _____

Activity the youth/young adult participated in if known _____

_____

CONTACT INFORMATION: (Must be complete)

Name of youth/young adult _____

Age_____   Sex _____

Current address _____

Current phone numbers _____

Interest in the project as indicated by the youth/young adult _____

_____

_____

Submit completed form to CPYP, Attention: Cheryl J. Jacobson.

Emancipated Youth Connections Project Initial Intake Form

Participant's Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Ethnicity: _____

Phone numbers: _____

E-mail address: _____

Previous names if applicable:

DOB: _____ Age: _____ SSN: _____

Name and address of county social service department at first removal:

Date and age at first removal: _____

Case # if known: _____

Name and address of county social service department at time of emancipation:

Date of Termination of Parental Rights if applicable: _____

Adoption date(s) and failed dates(s) if applicable, names/location of adoptive parents:

Caseworker name(s) if known and county:

Birth family information:

Past foster parent information:

Placement history (include number of placements, indicate if placement is a foster home, group home, institution, hospitalization, Juvenile Detention, etc.):

Chronological history after care:

Important relationships currently in youth's life:

Past important relationship:

Current functioning information (employment, education, legal involvement, spiritual/religious, sexual orientation and gender identity, mental health involvement, marital, how meeting basic needs of food and shelter, etc.):

Connections (past and current):

    Professional:

    Organizations:

    Interests and Hobbies:

Barriers (include previous and current risk behaviors, drug/alcohol use, suicide attempts, sexual behavior, etc.):

Plan (include participant's desired outcome):

Developed by: Cheryl J. Jacobson

Hopelessness Scale

_____
Name of Person Administering Test

Date_____

Total Score_____

HPLS – SCALE

These sentences are about how some kids feel about their lives. Your answers let us know about how kids feel about things. There are no right or wrong answers. Just tell me if the sentence is like you or not like you – true or false.

Please circle the response (True/False) that most closely fits your opinion of whether the sentence is like or not like you.

1	I want to get older because I think things will be better.	True	False
2	I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself.	True	False
3	When things are going badly, I know that they won't be bad all of the time.	True	False
4	I can imagine what my life will be like when I get older.	True	False
5	I have enough time to finish the things I really want to do.	True	False
6	Someday, I will be good at doing the things that I really care about.	True	False
7	I will get more of the good things in life than most other young adults.	True	False
8	I don't have good luck and there's no reason to think I will when I get older.	True	False
9	All I can see ahead of me are bad things, not good things.	True	False
10	I don't think I will get what I really want.	True	False
11	When I get older, I think I will be happier than I am now.	True	False
12	Things just won't work out the way I want them to.	True	False
13	I never get what I want, so it's dumb to want anything.	True	False
14	I don't think I will have any real fun when I get older.	True	False
15	Tomorrow seems unclear and confusing to me.	True	False
16	I will have more good times than bad times.	True	False
17	There's no use in really trying to get something I want because I probably won't get it.	True	False

HOPELESSNESS SCALE (HPLS)

Timeframes

- The HPLS-Scale will be completed at the same time frames as the CAFAS (program entry, every six months, and at program exit).

Administration of the HPLS-Scale

- The HPLS-Scale is read to the youth to facilitate comprehension.

Instructions to the youth

These sentences are about how some kids feel about their lives. Your answers let us know about how kids feel about things.

I am going to read each sentence to you. I'd like you to tell me if the sentence is <u>true</u> for you or <u>false</u> for you. If the sentence is how you feel, you would say it is <u>like you</u> or <u>true</u>. If the sentence is <u>not</u> how you think or feel, you would say it is <u>not like you</u> or <u>false</u>.

Let's try some examples:

A. When I grow up, I want to be a teacher.   True   False

B. I don't think I will have a pet when I grow up.   True   False

(For each example, stop to explain what the answer given by the youth means.)

There are no right or wrong answers. Just tell me if the sentence is like you or not like you – true or false.

Scoring of the HPLS-Scale

- The HPLS scale is scored so that higher scores (maximum = 17) reflect greater hopelessness or negative expectancies for the future.

- O&E will calculate the score. We'll write the total score (ranging from 0-17) on the front page of the HPLS-Scale.

Youth Permanency Scale

Name of Person Completing this form: _____ Date: _____

I am a/an (check one):   _____Youth   _____Adult   _____Social worker

Please circle the type of permanency that best describes the situation:

  I) *Relational*—a parenting relationship between a youth and an adult

  2) *Relational/Physical Placement*—a parenting relationship between a youth and an adult that is also a physical placement

  3) *Relational/Legal Status*—a parenting relationship between a youth and an adult that has a legal status

  4) *Relational/Physical/Legal*—a parenting relationship between a youth and an adult that involves a physical placement with a legal status

Please rate the following eight elements as it applies to the type of permanency you selected above. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "definitely not" and 10 being "definitely," circle the number that best corresponds. If you do not know the answer to the question, please circle "DK".

1.	There is at least one significant adult in my (the youth's) life.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*

2.	I have (the youth has) a parenting relationship that feels safe and secure.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*

3.	I feel (the youth feels) loved by at least one adult.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*

4.	I feel (the youth feels) there is someone there for me no matter what.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*	

5.	I feel (the youth feels) there is someone who will support and listen to me for the rest of the youth's/my life.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*	

6.	My (the youth's) opinion really mattered and I was included in the decision about where I would live.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*	

7.	The living situation that I am in (that the youth is in) is a legal one.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*	

8.	I have (the youth has) a chance to keep in contact with the important people in my life.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK
	Definitely Not									*Definitely*	

APPENDIX T

EYCP Relative Search Report Form

In the spaces provided below please provide information pertaining to the relative searches that you performed for your participants. Identify both the source of the information (Internet search using US Search, father's birth certificate, etc.) and how the search was carried out (wrote letters to all addresses, or placed phone calls to . . .). We are interested in your thought process in how/why you decided to try to contact the people that you did. Also, if you placed an ad, how did you decided upon the particular paper and content for the ad? We have prompted you by listing several potential search methods below – please do not hesitate to describe a method we have neglected to list. If it is easier to do so, you may combine the searches for a particular program (i.e., "used US Search three times" etc.). In the **Results of Search(es)** section, please describe what, if anything, the search led to, for example: located and made contact with maternal uncle, located three cousins, one of whom was interested in contact, etc. Please use a separate form for each participant.

Participant Name:

Type of Search Conducted (examples: Internet, case file mining, birth/death certificates, contact past caseworker, prison system database, placed newspaper ad, letter writing, Indian Child Welfare Act Tribal Contact, any method not listed above): Please be as specific as possible.

Date of Search(es):

Results of Search(es): (include # of people searched for and # found)

_____

Type of Search Conducted (examples: Internet, case file mining, birth/death certificates, contact past caseworker, prison system database, placed newspaper ad, letter writing, Indian Child Welfare Act Tribal Contact, any method not listed above): Please be as specific as possible.

Date of Search(es):

Results of Search(es): (include # of people searched for and # found)

APPENDIX U

EYCP Service Referral Data

Please note *each effort* made to refer your participant to another agency/service and the extent to which the participant is taking advantage of the referral. If the participant would possibly make better use of the referral if provided with additional support (financial, transportation, etc.), please include this information in your "results" section. You may use this form for multiple participants.

Participant Name: Date of Referral:

Referred to (agency name and type of service provided):

"Results" of Referral (Was contact made by participant? Is this referral being used? If so, how frequently? If not, why not?):

_____

Participant Name: Date of Referral:

Referred to (agency name and type of service provided):

"Results" of Referral (Was contact made by participant? Is this referral being used? If so, how frequently? If not, why not?):

_____

Participant Name: Date of Referral:

Referred to (agency name and type of service provided):

"Results" of Referral (Was contact made by participant? Is this referral being used? If so, how frequently? If not, why not?):

_____

Emancipated Youth Connections Project
Quarterly Progress Report Form

Today's Date: _____ Name of Contract Worker _____

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Goal: (Has goal changed, and if so, how?)

Time Spent on Case Since Last Report

Time Researching/Reading File (including contact w/county):   ____:____ hrs : mins

Time Speaking with Participant (either by phone or in person):   ____:____ hrs : mins

Time Searching for Connections (by Internet, phone, etc.)
  not including mining the county files: ____:____ hrs : mins

Time Speaking with Connections (either by phone or in person):   ____:____ hrs : mins

Travel Time: ____:____ hrs : mins

Other (please explain): _____ :   ____:____ hrs : mins

Level on Permanency Scale:

_____   1.   Participant has no existing or potential lifelong connections

_____   2.   Participant has a potential lifelong connection but no commitment has been made

_____   3.   Participant has a lifelong connection to a caring adult

_____   4.   A change in legal status: adoption, guardianship, reunification, is in process

_____   5.   Adoption, guardianship, reunification has occurred

General Information

Please describe any significant change in this participant's life since the date of your last report (i.e., change in any of the areas on the Intake Form listed under barriers and current functioning).

Permanency Efforts

Youth's attitude about permanency: How would you characterize this participant's current attitude about forming a permanent connection with a caring adult? (Choose one)

__ Wants a permanent connection

__ Is ambivalent

__ Does not want a permanent connection

__ Do not yet know the participant's attitude about forming a permanent connection

Please elaborate:

Success of Permanency Efforts: Has this participant strengthened a relationship with a caring adult who has the potential to be a lifelong permanent connection? If yes, please describe.

Seeking Connections: How were potential permanency connections sought and found? Who did this? Were there any unusual, special, or unique methods employed? Were there any especially difficult or surprising barriers? Were there barriers in obtaining past case file information of social services from the previous counties with which the participant was involved?

Decision Making: What potential permanency connections were identified? Have they been located? From among potential permanency resources/families, how and by whom were choices made (i.e., participant's attitude toward the potential connections)?

Support Resources: Has any person or external agency or community resource helped with the permanency effort? What did they contribute?

Other Comments: Please describe anything else that has either helped or hindered your efforts to achieve permanency for this participant.

Successful Permanency Outcomes

Please describe any financial, medical, educational, therapeutic, social, or other resources that have been or are important for the support of this relationship. What referrals were made? What services were needed but could not be located?

What have you learned in this case that you wish to contribute toward practice in the future pertaining to achieving permanency for emancipated foster youth?

Please be prepared to write a narrative summary of this case that may be used for the evaluation report or for public distribution such as on the web site.

Emancipated Youth Connections Project
Participant Survey Following Group Meeting

On September 23, 2006 we brought together program participants to discuss their experiences in the Emancipated Youth Connections Project. The purpose of the gathering was to allow participants to meet face-to-face, share their feelings and thoughts about their experiences, and determine how we could improve the project for current and future participants. Because not all participants were able to attend and since even those that did attend may not have had sufficient time and opportunity to express themselves, we've decided to ask all of you to respond to a few questions.

Your answers will be kept anonymous – PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE SURVEY or provide any identifying names, places, etc., in your responses. A self-addressed, stamped envelope has been included for your convenience.

We would appreciate if you could respond soon (within the next week or so) as we are anxious to use your feedback to improve the project. Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to these questions. Please use the back of these pages if you need additional room.

1. Progress Toward Goals of Project: Please provide comments (positive and negative) about your experiences in the project as you and your connections contract worker move toward your project goals. (How has the project been helpful to you finding and forming connections and how could it be more helpful?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Frequency of Meetings with Your Connections Contract Worker
In the last few months, how often have you met with your connections contract worker?

      Less than once/month____   About once/month ____   More than once/month ____

How often _would you like_ to meet with your worker? ____ times per month

If you would like to meet more often, what have been the main barriers to doing so?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Meetings with Other Participants: Would you like EYCP to bring together program participants again (as was done on 9/23/06) and if so, how frequently should the meetings be held, what format should they take, and what issues should be discussed? (If you attended the 9/23 meeting feel free to also comment upon what you liked or disliked about that meeting.)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Online Message Board: Have you used the online message board and do you find it helpful? Are there any ways that you think it could be improved?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Additional Support: How could EYCP be of greater assistance to you as you pursue your project goals?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Other Suggestions for Project Improvement: Please describe any other ways that the project could be improved for you or for future participants.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

C.P.Y.P.
California Permanency for Youth Project

663 13th Street, Suite 300 • Oakland, CA 94612
Tel: 510.268.0038 • Fax: 510.268.8496 • www.cpyp.org